

# A Collection of Writings by John Rieley

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### Corrections

- p. 13— a line of connection (with 'to')
- p. 21—Luke 1:6 *P.22 8, 3rd line 2:10*
- p. 31—67314 ~~10000~~ *M-40*  
White Pigeon, MI 49099
- p. 34—cross out ~~in~~ in world, first paragraph
- p. 42—Darby, end of largest paragraph
- p. 46—third line, 'from'
- p. 70—first line of second paragraph, insert 'from'
- p. 92—second line, 'by' for 'but'
- p. 141—last paragraph, line 7, 'life' for 'live'
- p. 144—third line from bottom, 'guns'
- p. 145—write in 'true in the 80s, just past middle of page
- p. 145—second line from bottom, 'farmers, with their tremendously low margin of profit, may have to take subsidies, or. . .'
- p. 146—insert 'not' after influence; cross out 'to'
- p. 148—fifth line, 'two' for 'tow'
- p. 156—third paragraph, middle of page, 'who' after 'any'
- p. 160—fifth line from bottom, cross out 'of time' after lawlessness
- p. 165—line 10 from bottom, cross out 'and' after 'effeminacy' and the comma

### A Courteous Appeal to Those Who Still Believe In the "Rapture," And A Two-Stage Coming Again Of Our Lord Jesus Christ

I especially appeal to those who have been strongly and systematically taught this, believing it to be Spiritual and Biblical.

First, I would ask, have you ever had access to books like these: "Our Lord Cometh," by Wm. J. Rowlands, The Blessed Hope by George Ladd, or books by S.P. Tregelles, B.W. Newton, or "The Approaching Advent by Alexander Reese?" Also, Geo. Ladd wrote a very important book which has an indirect, but powerful bearing on the manner and time of the Lord's Coming-- "The Gospel of the Kingdom." And there are several tracts and booklets available from the Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony in England; they are not easily available here in the United States. These writings give an alternative to the more popular view, and contend for one Glorious Coming, after the tribulation time, as taught by our Lord Himself in Matt. 24. Ask for any of these, and I can at least help you to know where and how to get them, if I don't have them.

One attraction to the two-stage Coming is that it is usually taught in conjunction with a literal regathering of the nation of Israel, which most of historic churches, Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed (including the older Presbyterian churches) did not teach or believe. All the prophets, especially the major ones, systematically predict an ultimate regathering of the nation of Israel, "Though I make a full end of all the nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished." (Jer. 30:11) "If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel FOR ALL THAT THEY HAVE DONE, saith the Lord." The reason

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I capitalized that phrase in Jer. 31:37 is that it cannot be applied to the Church, or to any other people; it is literal Israel, and the phrase calls attention to all their proneness to idolatry in the past, to all their unbelief, stubbornness and disobedience up to the time of their enlightenment and restoration--as a nation. Rebels will be purged out, and a remnant received back.

Zechariah 14 seems to be very definite about the defeat of the nations which are gathered against Jerusalem in the latter days, for it describes a terrible and devastating Plague, and ends with "...men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited." As to the time, "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that Day shall there be one Lord, and His Name one."

In America, dispensational teachers were for a time mingled with pre-millennial teachers in prophecy conferences--from about 1900 to 1920, or a bit later, but they rather rapidly dominated those conferences, and became much more vocal, writing many books and tracts. Practically all of them were free from liberalism and the "higher criticism" of Germany, and professed to faithfully teach everything from the Bible, God's written word; they stressed literal interpretation, and that attracted multitudes to them, especially simple-minded and practical people, like many of the American people have been. More and more, though, these dispensational teachers stressed a two-stage Coming of the Lord, and promised Christians that they would not have to go through the intensive tribulation time of the end. But a minority--usually quieter stayed with the older pre-millennial teaching--that the Lord was coming once--the "second time," but in power and great glory. Many of you know that modern dispensational teaching began in the decade following 1830, and the strongest proponent was J.N. Darby. George Muller, of happy memory, was thoroughly exposed to this, but never

believed or taught it, seeing that it had no Scriptural basis; he did write devotionally on the coming of the Lord.

The "rapture" and two-stage coming theory has been very appealing to many in the British Isles, where it started, but even more to American Christians. It has been "grafted in" to the belief and teaching of most of the smaller evangelical groups, including "holiness" people, and probably a large majority of Pentecostal groups. Of course, the Scofield Bible was by far the most potent influence in spreading this belief.

Just because teachers were faithful in insisting that Israel will be regathered and brought back again to the favor of God, and have apparently stood for a literal interpretation of Scripture does not prove that they're right in all other things. Let me point out that none of these dispensational leaders (as far as I know) have centered their teaching in the Kingdom of God, as Jesus did! Jesus came preaching and announcing the Kingdom of God as a reality (but of a spiritual character, as in the Beatitudes), and manifesting its power. If you read the first three gospels carefully, you will observe that John the Baptist, Jesus, and the twelve were, at the first, proclaiming that the kingdom of God had come near (that is what "at hand" means, in Greek), but if you will be attentive, when you get to Acts 8:12 and onward, you will find the evangelists and apostles preaching the kingdom of God, and the Name of Jesus Christ, and, of course, forgiveness of sins, and salvation through His Name. But NO ONE EVER SAYS, AT ANY TIME IN THE BOOK OF ACTS THAT "THE KINGDOM OF GOD HAS COME NEAR." Because it had come, and men were being called into it--Jesus Himself predicted the coming of the kingdom, with power, in the lifetime of many who heard him. (Mk. 9:1) The "them" of Mark 9:1 includes the crowd of 8:34, so seeing the Kingdom of God come with power is not limited to the three who right after this went up on the mount of transfiguration--they only saw



the personal majesty of Jesus.

Now, almost all dispensational teachers, past and present, teach that the Kingdom Jesus announced was the physical kingdom that the Jews had a "right" to expect, and that when the Jews wouldn't receive Jesus, their Messiah, the kingdom was postponed, and will be established after this church age has run its course, and is completed. Thus, we could say, they focus on the church; make it the center of God's purposes, and neglect the Kingdom of God! If you are a careful thinker, and tremble at God's Word, you will have to abandon the idea of a postponed Kingdom--it is about as ridiculous an idea as a teacher or a prophet could come up with! For the Lord Jesus announced that it had come near, and his disciples announced the same thing; He Himself said, "The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the Kingdom of God is preached, and every man presses into it." Then see in Acts Paul consistently preaching the Kingdom of God. (19:8, 20:24, 25 and 28:23, 31) He summarizes the character of the Kingdom in Romans 14:17 -- "not eating and drinking, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." The Kingdom, in its spiritual character--what Jesus announced --is present, established, and the gospel of the Kingdom is still bringing men of every nation, tribe, and tongue into it. Leaders who deny this are essentially disobedient -- also unbelieving!

So, dispensational teachers and leaders have consistently (though, of course, in greatly varying degrees) undermined the obedience and submission of Christians, for the main aspect of the Kingdom of God for us is the "rule of God." But faith in Jesus Christ, we receive not only forgiveness of sins, but the Holy Spirit and a new life; we become obedient to God for the first time in our lives. But our obedience has to grow and increase, and it has to be nurtured by good, healthy and sound teaching. In the first edition of the Scofield Bible (all copies before

the New Scofield Bible came out) it had this absolutely false, iniquitous comment on page 1,000: "For these (or, this) reasons, the Sermon on the Mount, in its primary application, give neither the privilege nor the duty of the Church." This was such a bad comment, and so opposed to most of the teaching through all the previous ages, that they took it out of the New Scofield Bible; I searched for it in one new edition, and couldn't find it! For the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount (and Luke 6, also) is so high, that carnal men try to get rid of it, or water down its principles and commandments.

Thus, under dispensational influence, an easy-believism system of salvation has gained great strength in popularity, in England, but much more in America, and possibly Canada. The Beatitudes have been almost universally neglected, and yet they are the very heart of the Lord's teaching. Happily, God has caused John MacArthur, Jr. to "wake up"-- he has written a book on the Beatitudes. "Kingdom Living, Here and Now"; also in "The Gospel According to Jesus," he refutes the worst aspects of dispensationalist's undermining of discipleship and obedience.

All these background reasons are necessary to consider in order to see the "whole picture"; the snatching of the church out of the world, and their rescue from the "great tribulation" doesn't fit in with suffering as a preparation for ruling and reigning with Christ, nor with true kingdom teaching. I trust several readers of this paper will see this clearly; it is very vital for those of you who have taught wrongly, and have been systematically taught so.

Our Lord said four times in John 6 (vs. 39, 40, 44 and 54) that He would raise His people up "at the last day"; that can also be translated "in the last day." Either way, it shows conclusively that there cannot be a resurrection before that! For when the Lord comes, His people are

raised-- those who are "asleep" -- that is clear from both I Thess. 1 (not mentioned at all in I Thess. 4), for "rest" from persecution and tribulation is "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul never taught any gospel that didn't include obedience; I underlined the word "obey" above to demonstrate that. Paul had no separate gospel even though he spoke of "my gospel"; all he meant by that is that his presentation was suitable for Gentiles, and included all the revelations which had been given to him -- it was still "the Gospel of the Kingdom" -- think back again to Acts 19:8, 20:25, and 28:23, 31.

Now let me share some figures which I acquired from the 1992 World Almanac, World Population. (Of course, the earlier figures are no doubt estimated -- more than the later ones.) I think we can be reasonably sure that figures from 1850 onward are not too far off.

1650: 550 million

1740: 725 million

1850: 1 billion, 175 million

1900: 1 billion, 600 million

1950: 2 billion, 565 million

1980: 4 billion, 477 million

1990: 5 billion, 333 million

1993: not given yet, but about 5 1/2 billion

Now, projected population for 2000 is 6 billion, 127 million; 2025 over 8 billion. It's possible, of course that we won't reach either the year 2000 or 2025.

The reason I have cited these figures, is because early "brethren" teachers, who originated and fostered modern dispensationalism, insisted that the Lord could come at any moment -- it was unspiritual to believe otherwise; many of them later parroted the idea, "He could come before this meeting is over." The theory was that if

we placed any event, or prophetic happening before the coming of the Lord, we were not really looking for Him; we were lacking in heart of affection.

If you could read a tract by Dan Crawford, written in the mid or late 1800s, it would be most profitable -- especially when you have a vital missionary interest. He saw that the harvest was not completed -- God had lots of people in Africa where he labored, and all over the world to add to the "one flock" and for completion of "the harvest."

Thus, if the Lord had come in 1830-1850, when this "any moment" coming teaching began to be widely disseminated and received, perhaps the harvest would have been "halved." I haven't taken time to figure that out with any precision. But since the world population doubled, approximately from 1850 to 1950, doubled again by 1990, and is between 4 and 5 times as many now as in 1850, we ought to see how dangerous and false that theory was and is. God was working steadily all through the 1800s and especially the last 2/3 of that century; evangelical Christianity was being spread over the entire earth. We still have the privilege of praying for laborers in the harvest; Japan, for instance, has never had a large harvest of people becoming Christians! We are not delaying the coming of the Lord at all by this; we will all know, by the signs the Lord gave, when the end is near. We will not know or need to know the day or hour, but we will not be overtaken by that Day "as a thief" (I Thess. 5:4) Truly, the great multitude of the redeemed and saved will be innumerable, as in Revelation 7:9; it has taken the lengthening out of this age to make it so!

I need to also mention that this 20th century has seen a continuation of a large harvest of souls; almost all expansion of evangelical Christianity in South America has been since 1900. The wonderful work of Wycliffe translators, getting the Scriptures into all languages, started and continues in this century; every tribe and language will

eventually hear!

Copies of this will go to some leaders and teachers; I beseech you to read this in the fear of God, and quit teaching the "rapture -- any moment" coming theory. We teachers will receive the heavier judgment; let us speak as the oracles of God!

### Factors in the Growth of Public Education, and Compulsory Schooling

Taken from the book "Who Owns the Children?" by Truth Forum

At the founding of our nation the State had no compulsory schooling powers. In regard to the document, which begins "We the People", the federal government founded on that Constitution was given absolutely no power over education. While State and local governments founded public schools in certain cases, there were no compulsory attendance laws in existence. These began in Massachusetts in the 1830s as an apostate Unitarian church, which denied the Deity of Christ, began the movement toward compulsory school attendance. Most Christian parents, despite some opposition, ultimately sacrificed their responsibility and control of education to the State authority, and it is against this general background, which was the pattern throughout the United States, that the present juridical interpretation (even in that most lenient interpretation expressed in such cases as Yoder, Rudisill, etc.) has come to prevail.

If Christian parents and churches today will arrive at a consistent Biblical interpretation of their educational responsibilities and stand together as one man, then perhaps we can regain -- or at least, forestall the further erosion of the educational and religious freedom that prevailed at the founding of our nation. In any case, if it is true that even the most lenient juridical position, which has come to prevail in many cases, contains inconsistencies that will compromise our Christian conviction on these issues, ultimately our accommodation to these decisions will undermine even the constitutional basis upon which we can stand and pave the way for greater governmental control of education and only more difficult conflicts in the days to come.

Because the Church has compromised its stand and because American society has slipped into a pattern of ever-greater private irresponsibility and growing State control, our liberties are indeed rapidly sifting (slipping) through the fingers of complacency and ignorance. Indeed, it is possible that a people can be so apostatized and removed from Godly restraints, as were the children of Israel under Zedekiah, that to control or punish them will take the governmental power of the political beast. In such a case, as in God's use of the kings of Assyria and Babylon, a wicked governmental power becomes God's "agent of wrath" to discipline not only a lawless world, but even His lukewarm, corrupt or backslidden people!

In the Babylonian captivity, Hebrew young men, for example, were taken away from their parents by the State and taught the knowledge of their pagan conquerors. To a large degree the Church has indeed come under the compulsory power of the State in regard to our religious liberties. And we have been brought under this power precisely because of our unwillingness to stand consistently, both in word and in deed, for the principles of God and Godliness. Nevertheless, it is perhaps still not too late for us to regain those liberties that we have lost. But if there is any hope of this at all, it can only come through a return to the Biblical foundations, from which we are so long departed. Indeed, even in the days when the Babylonian captivity had begun, God, speaking through the prophet Jeremiah, held out this promise -- together with this threat -- to the remnant of Judah: "This is what Yahweh, the God of Israel, to whom you sent me to present your petition, says -- If you stay in this land, I will build you up, and not tear you down; I will plant you and not uproot you, for I am grieved over the disaster I have inflicted on you. Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon, whom you now fear. Do not be afraid of him, declares Yahweh, for I am with you, and will save you and deliver you from his

hands. I will show you compassion, so that he will have compassion on you, and restore you to your land. However, if you say, 'we will not stay in this land,' and so disobey Yahweh, and your God, and if you say 'No, we will go and live in Egypt, where we will not see war, or hear the trumpet or be hungry for bread,' then hear the word of Yahweh, O remnant of Judah. This is what Yahweh Almighty, the God of Israel says: 'If you are determined to go to Egypt, and you do go to settle there, then the sword you fear will overtake you there and the famine you dread will follow you into Egypt, and there you will die by the sword, famine, and plague; not one of them will survive or escape the disaster I will bring on them. (Jer. 42:9-17)

We have lost much of our religious liberty because we have compromised our Godly position in regard to our own Egyptian welfare state. Because of that compromise our position is today greatly weakened and the enemy greatly strengthened. But if we attempt to regain ground through a compromise of Godly conviction, -- "The sword you fear will overtake you..." (Jer. 42:16) Compromise, even the smallest compromise, of Godly conviction will only lead to still greater defeat. Our only hope lies in digging to the bedrock of God's Word and taking our stand there, not in rebellion, nor in spiritual pride, but in hope and trust that the God whom we serve may yet deliver us and secure for us the liberty to serve Him fully and without State restrictions. If He chooses not to do so, we may say with Job, "Yahweh gave, and Yahweh hath taken away; blessed be the name of Yahweh."

... (Several lines omitted) true Christian liberty demands that the State leave Christian education completely alone. If the State wishes to continue to be involved in the educational process in general, it should end the compulsory nature of this process and allow pluralism in the public schools by placing the control of those institutions back in the hands of the local communities.

The State should replace its present activist role in the educational process with a noninterventionist role, permitting basic decisions to be put back entirely in the hands of parents. Even within the public education system itself State education departments and the courts should withdraw in favor of the primacy of the local school boards in all educational matters. Without those measures being taken, public education must inevitably augment the power of the all-encompassing State.

... (A few more lines omitted) Parents who wish to do so may use the home education alternative, which has been remarkably effective. If the State wishes to remain in education, let it then do so on a completely free market basis. It is ironic that Americans, with their historic distrust of socialism, who believe that private consumers can make the best choice in the kind of car or the kind of bread they will buy, have entrusted unto a basically socialist-type educational system the control of the most precious responsibility within their power, the minds and hearts of their children. As Joseph Sobran has remarked: "Many conservative and libertarian critics have pointed out that education is the one area of our lives in which socialistic premises have won unquestioned support." Most people today can hardly imagine another system. That is why so many Americans fail to see half the evil of totalitarian systems in which brainwashing begins in kindergarten. The bureaucratist often admires these systems outright, just as he jealously regards the formation of young minds as the States' prerogative." ... (more lines omitted) Ultimately, however, it appears that the only way for a parent to truly exercise control over his child's education is through some form of private education -- for the Christian this means through some church educational ministry, either in a classroom setting, or in the home."

A few comments by John Rieley

It is absolutely sure that public education will incorporate more and more lies and idolatry into their training. Why do I so strongly express that? Because I have read rather extensively about Germany and the Holocaust, and I can analyze that the Prussian public educational system was a main factor preparing the way for that. The State church was another factor, and we are mercifully free from that, as yet. Hitler's power lay in at least two things -- State control of education, and the idolatry of the German people in giving him their sons and daughters for military training, and service to the "fatherland." Hitler rapidly brought the boys and girls of Germany into his "Hitler youth"; eventually even rather large church youth groups (including Roman Catholic) surrendered to him. From that time they were rapidly trained for military service; even the girls were well trained in that mentality, and for back-up service.

We ought to know from the Bible that our children and we belong to our Creator and to our God alone -- not to the State! Civil government is given from God to keep order, but not to commandeer the lives of the people. All Gentile governments tend to grab for more and more power, and to demand more and more the loyalty of all their peoples. God allowed (and established) the American system possibly to demonstrate what man would do under maximum outward liberty, and possibly for other reasons I don't understand, or can't think of. False teachers, in the name of Christianity, will "glide," so to speak, from the principle of submission to the "powers that be" (Romans 13:1-7 -- which mainly applies to civil government in its God-appointed authority to restrain evil and punish evildoers.) As a young Christian, I knew that kind of teaching was false, but much more clearly later I saw that it is essentially idolatry. What is the difference between "submission" and complete obedience to the "powers that be"?

Submission to the "powers that be" is obedience to God, for He put them in power, and gives them the "sword." But that is limited, as all other obedience to men; obedience to God and Christ, in the Kingdom of God is absolute. From a Biblical standpoint, civil government is needed and provided for, in a world of evil and lustful men, but they don't operate directly in the Kingdom of God - they operate in a sinful world. And that world lies in the power of the Evil One (Satan) during this age.

So it is idolatry both to give our sons and daughters for their education, or for the ultimate military training, or absolute service, which it probably always leads toward. Why do all the developed Gentile nations teach history, and their own prejudiced version of it? It is to bring all the citizens to loyalty, of which "patriotism" is a primary manifestation and example. And, do you think you can separate this from war and violence?

When I was young, it was hard to see the satanic character of public education -- it looked relatively innocent and good -- good for better jobs and more income. But among those with a good Bible knowledge and their senses exercised to know good and evil, there must have been a few who could see the ultimate result. In the U.S. it took a lot of drug taking and a general increase in lawlessness and violence to open the eyes of many Christians, but praise God their eyes are at least partially opened! The home schooling movement has grown by leaps and bounds, and we can be sure that God, in mercy, is behind it, and energizing it.

Let us be very wary and watchful; the Gentile State, right here in America, as all over the world, is maneuvering and grabbing for more and more power; we dare not trust it at all -- not even a little bit! That is why many of the religious leaders are dangerous; they are trying to show that this country had a Christian origin, which it did not; there was only a general acknowledgment of Providence and

the Creator, but no acknowledgment of Jesus Christ, the appointed and only Way to God. Such leaders are probably already idolatrous in their inner beings (deceived, and not knowing it), and are not absolutely loyal to Christ and the Kingdom of God. That is the only absolute loyalty our children or we should have!

We know from Revelation that all the kings of the earth and their armies will eventually come against Christ and be destroyed. We also know that the Devil and Satan deceives all the nations; that is clearly revealed in two different passages in Revelation.

So let us live in the Kingdom of God, and take whatever persecution this evil world gives us; let us control the training of our children, and let us never, never assent to their being trained for war, for if they are thus trained, they will fight and die. And it will not be for Christ and the Kingdom of God, either. All Christ's teaching is toward practicing and living in peace. Let us train our sons and daughters to serve the Living and True God, our sons to preach and teach the gospel of the glory of Christ, and turn men to righteousness. Let us remember that the apostle John saw fit to caution, even at the very end of his first epistle, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols"; that is also needed today, as we near the end of the age.

Controlling the education of your children, therefore, is a "front-line" position, so to speak; it is not a negotiable option! Either home-school them, or have other Christians do it. Some of you will not be in a church group large enough, or with enough people thinking and acting in that direction, so you may have to home-school. Don't fear or be timid, for though many have started with some temptation in that direction, they have found that God is with them, and the longer they have home-schooled, the more confidence they have acquired. Some of you will be with a church group large enough to have its own school, but don't let the government determine the books and study

material; there is lots now that is God and truth centered, and you can get a lot of help in keeping all your educational labor in that direction. When you do it for God, you have His approval, and be sure that He will back you up, even as He is doing with thousands, even in our day.

## The Christian and War

1. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." What a privilege! But does not this blessing also imply that the violent--those striving for their rights, and those participating in war and fighting--will not be blessed? Yes, in large measure, for certainly they do not have the dignity and character of God.

2. Jesus commands His disciples, "resist not evil (or him that is evil)," and this in a context of being slapped on the cheek. In everyday language, He is saying, "Don't fight back--don't try to get even." (Matt. 5:39)

He also adds, "Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you." (Matt. 5:44) Luke 6:27 adds, "Do good to those who hate you."

Luke 6:35 is a very comprehensive command, "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men."

The above-quoted commands are on the basis of becoming like God the Father in His kindness and mercy to all men. And Jesus' entire life and ministry here on earth was a demonstration of that kindness, mercy and love--always entirely above what men deserved!

Therefore, those of us who have repented, and come to Jesus Christ for forgiveness of our sins, and 'rest for our souls' and have been given the Holy Spirit *can* obey the above commands. We are first, children of God through His grace and love to us (John 1:12, I John 3:1 NAS, or NIV), but we can also become sons and daughters through growth in grace, and obedience to his commands, through His Only Son, Jesus our Lord.

Most of the past generations of professed Christians have known these words and commands, but they have

fallen grievously short of obeying them. But God is gently and firmly leading us on to complete obedience, for "To obey is better than sacrifice." Many of you wish to have your children obey and honor you. To that end, you love and discipline them. Do you not recognize that our Heavenly Father's will for us is that we learn and practice complete obedience? Most of the activities and programs of the denominational churches have no connection with obedience at all, and very little with discipleship.

By faith we can please God; without it we can't. Jesus' commands to us are all linked with faith, for He reminds us that God our Father knows how many hairs are on all of our heads; He knows all our needs, even before we ask for them; He controls sunshine and rain and sends them to all men, and He will reward every thing done.

Most Christian leaders down through the centuries have had very little faith, and have not learned obedience well; so they failed to teach the Beatitudes, the Sermon on the Mount, and Jesus' other teaching as consistently and strongly as they should have done. But God always had a remnant that did walk in faith and love, and self-denial, obeying Jesus as Lord. This appears to be true of many of the early Waldensians, the peaceful 'Anabaptists' of the 16th century (and long afterwards, for many of them, up to our day!), the Moravians, and, later some 'dissenters' in Britain, like 'Brethren.' Some Quakers also rendered a fair measure of obedience to Christ, seeing that they were not so Bible-based. And there were others--always a 'little flock' who feared God and obeyed.

Many obedient Christians have come to America to escape persecution, state churches, military service, and to seek freedom. Thousands of these agree that we should obey Christ and stay out of war (Mennonites, Hutterites, Amish, and others). So we are without excuse; God has put people among us (though far from perfect, of course) who do obey some of Jesus' most important commands; they

have been good 'salt' among us.

Therefore, the most basic reason for staying out of the Gentiles' wars is obedience to Christ, based on faith. Similar commands by the apostles are: Rom. 12:14, 17-21; Col. 3:13, 14; Heb. 12:14; I Peter. 3:11; I John 3:14; and Rom. 13:9, 10, though mostly a series of negative commands, is extremely important. Part of loving your neighbor as yourself is to never do harm to him.

3. A second major reason for staying out of war is that we, collectively (and in most of the countries of the world, by now) are a holy nation--we have been called out of darkness into the Kingdom of God--"Righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). Jesus' teaching revolved around the Kingdom of God, which He came announcing and proclaiming. Repentance and new birth bring us into this kingdom, which is God's actual rule in the hearts of and over His own chosen people. Of course, that rule is established gradually; we grow and we get discipline. Luke 16:16 indicates that the Kingdom of God is the fulfillment of what the law and the prophets were preparing for--they were necessary, but imperfect. The Kingdom of God, under Jesus Christ, the Son of God, brings a much further completion. The parables reveal the coming, character, and growth of the Kingdom; that it spreads by preaching, telling, and living the gospel, but that it will remain a minority kingdom--a people who are the salt of the earth and the light of the world ('good ground' hearers who are a 'little flock' Luke 12: 32).

One of the names of our Lord and King is "Prince of Peace," and He left us a different kind of peace than the world can give. (John 14:27) If we forsake His words, and the commands He gave us to not resist evil, and to walk in love, we will forfeit that peace in the measure that we disobey. Probably most Christians down through the ages have not been taught adequately that they cannot live and



serve in two kingdoms--that they have been called into a heavenly kingdom of light, righteousness, peace and joy, and out of Satan's kingdom of darkness and strife and misery. War is an ultimate manifestation of the darkness, the strife and unrest of Satan's kingdom; lust and hate are two of its sources.

Jesus taught that a kingdom divided against itself couldn't stand, or endure. This implies, for us, and undivided allegiance to our Lord Jesus, and a resolute refusal to try to serve any Gentile kingdom, including the United States. When he taught that we could not be His disciples if we didn't 'hate' all other human relationships (comparatively), he was emphasizing that He must have first place, and have our total allegiance and obedience. Anything that comes between the Lord and us is idolatry, even if it is not a graven image. Let's say it plainly: serving a national flag and a Gentile nation is idolatry--nothing less. We Christians belong to the Kingdom of God, and to no lesser entity.

4. I want to elaborate a bit more on being 'the salt of the earth and the light of the world' (Matt. 5:13, 14). Being 'salt' brings into focus, if you are a close and attentive hearer, that we will remain a minority, for only a little salt is used for taste and seasoning, and that is the use of salt that the Lord focused on--not as a preservative. Generally, even Christians have not been content to be only salt and light; human ambitions have been mixed in, and when their numbers have substantially increased, Christians have tried to change or control the world! But that never works--it isn't God's program for us! Our obedience to Christ, with an undivided allegiance is probably the biggest factor in being good 'salt'--not losing our taste!

5. "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and every one who loves is born of God and knows

God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love." (I John 4:7, 8) And Paul reminds us that "love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law." (Rom. 13:10) This is the negative aspect of love, but very important. There is positively no way one can participate in war, and not do some wrong or harm to someone. In the description of divine love in I Cor. 13, the first quality mentioned is "suffers long"; really that is also an indirect reproof of war and violence, for over 90 percent of the people are completely unwilling to suffer (through lack of faith and their own self-reliance); they fight and strive for their rights, and for material things. Let none of you be naive, and think you are strong in the Lord, mature, or ready to be manifested sons, if you are not walking in love, and abstaining from hurting and injuring others! The basic principle of self-denial also enforces this.

6. The whole world lies in "the power of the evil one." (I John 5:19 NASV) Satan offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory when he tempted Him. (Luke 4:5, 6) Though Satan has only temporary power during this age, this was a real temptation--Satan's claim that these kingdoms were delivered over to him was not a total lie--otherwise, would it have been really a temptation? The essence of the temptation was for Jesus to try to take the dominion *ahead of time*, which He will have, in the next age when He comes again. God, for inscrutable reasons, allowed Satan to control all this power and glory--big cities, long, wonderful highways, big ships of the seas, huge airplanes, all the electric lights, and wonderful inventions of men--yet all mixed in with learning and training for war and fighting, fear, continual unrest, and with innumerable casualties in broken marriages, broken families, crime everywhere, and multitudes in defeat and darkness, with no hope.

When Christians are not persecuted they lose

their sense of being in an evil and hostile world. They forget that two of the Beatitudes pronounce blessing on those persecuted (A.) for righteousness' sake, and (B.) for the Name of Jesus Christ. Let's be realistic; God has allowed many faithful Christians to immigrate here, and He gave several great Awakenings, but America is still a country filled with greedy and covetous people (think of insurance, banking especially where interest rates of 15% and more are charged), and the vast numbers seeking doles and 'something for nothing', and those getting part of their living and affluence from interest which poor people eventually have to pay; think of the immorality of every kind, the abominable perversion of homosexuality, and more crime than in most civilized nations, and probably most of the rest of the world! Can anyone fight for the United States without also fighting for the freedom of evil men to go on with all these things, immorality, crime, and violence? How much righteousness is left, even if the Lord allowed you to fight for that, which He doesn't? Yes, praise God, there is still some 'salt' in this country, which has not lost its taste, but perhaps less than you think. This is NOT a Christian nation; there is no realism in such a claim. So we are commanded, "Do not love the world, neither the things which are in the world; if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (I John 2:15) When unfaithful church leaders try to justify Christians' taking part in war, we can be reasonably sure that makes them afraid to come out and be separate, and then get the persecution and reproach which this brings. Follow only leaders who do not love the world, and who therefore are able to teach the whole counsel of God.

7. When Peter tried to defend His Lord with a sword, Jesus told him to put the sword back into its place (sheath). Jesus had allowed the disciples to get two swords, but only two, probably to teach them a lesson. Then

he explained that He had to drink the cup (go through the suffering) given Him by His Father, and He further declared an eternal principle: "All who take the sword (resort to and use violence, and kill) shall perish with the sword. (Matt. 26:52) The sword, guns, and all weapons shall eventually be abolished from the universe, when God makes everything new. Do you want to perish with the sword? See, then, that you tremble at this statement of Jesus Christ; it is part of His words, which shall never pass away! The Lord did not, and could not bless those who use the sword, guns, or practice any violence against fellowmen; He did bless those persecuted for righteousness, and for His names' sake--the mourners, those suffering, and the peacemakers!

8. The way we let our light shine (as 'the light of the world') is through good works. (Matt. 5:16--also see Eph. 2:10) War includes all evil works; at the very least, it is a turning aside from good works and mercy to the opposite--destruction, hurt and pain, and great waste. Protestant Christians, in particular, have been slow and mediocre in practicing good works. And their leaders have not kept it before their people--too much legal justification, and too few good works! Since our Lord Jesus Christ "Went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil," then our zeal and persistence in good works will show and manifest us to be more like Him-- "conformed to the image of His Son."

9. Jesus prayed for our unity in John 17, and that it be manifested to the world; also Eph. 4:10-13 indicates that the gifted men that Christ gave to His people as leaders will help bring them to maturity and unity (the term 'a perfect man' is singular, and so must be a figure of speech for God's people corporately). War certainly destroys this unity, for we are scattered in most countries of the world-

-how can we fight against each other, or do harm to each other? The world will know the reality of our faith and the Gospel when we love one another (all Christians) and refuse to turn aside from that love!

10. In summary, there is no faith, no mercy, and no love, in the practice of war; if any is there, it is in spite of the surroundings, and because of God's overruling providence. Those are the excellent qualities, which God, by grace, has provided that Christians should have and walk in. Let us "pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace..." II Tim. 2:22.

### Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

When God created mankind in His image, He created them male and female. Man was created first, but God said that it wasn't good for him to be alone, so He created the woman to be with man; thus He ordained marriage. Marriage normally produces children, and God had ordained that man should spread abroad over all the earth, and develop and use all of its resources. This took place gradually, as children were born and the population increased. But marriage is marriage, even if the woman cannot have children. Man and wife become one flesh when they live together, and companionship and unity can be good.

When the Lord ordained marriage, He said, "For this cause (that they are made male and female, and are given by God a strong attraction for each other) a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and two shall become one flesh." A few clear implications can be drawn, for He added an injunction: "Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate;"

1. The Lord is referring, primarily, to first marriages, for the man is regarded as making his headquarters with his parents up till then.
2. The two become one flesh by living together; it is a physical union.
3. He must be referring to all lawful marriages, in all tribes and cultures. This implication may not be as clear to everyone, but since Jesus Christ was co-creator with His Father, and since marriage is for the whole race; it is not likely that He narrowed down the "joined together" to Jews, Christians, or any lesser entity than the whole human race.

It needs to be stressed that "one flesh" does not mean one spirit, or one soul, or one personality. It is striking that even very intelligent men should say things

like "they become one person." At least two writers that I have read recently tried to say that the physical aspect of marriage was a "minor" aspect! Maybe they forgot why they got married! That shows how sloppy men's thinking can be, and how little objectivity they can have in treating marriage and divorce. Behold, how important to be entirely subject to the Word of God, and hear it very carefully - "one flesh." We can be sure that Jesus deliberately said "one flesh" to show the basic character of marriage. Each person in a marriage retains their separate personalities, and each one will individually give account to God in the judgment, but their physical oneness is real. Adultery, therefore, is consorting and being with another partner than the one first lived with. John the Baptist, for example, told Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." Herod's brother was living, evidently, so that was a manifest example of adultery. And adultery is forbidden by the 7th of the Ten Commandments, and everywhere else in the Bible.

Recognizing who are joined by God, and the physical character of marriage, are necessary and foundational considerations; otherwise, one's thinking and evaluations are apt to be fuzzy, uncertain, and incomplete -- even against God's Word!

The other things that accompany marriage and are integral with it are: 1. Commitment to each other (words like "forsaking all others" are in most of the ceremonies); and 2. A public testimony, so that all society knows about the marriage and commitment -- this, in our later times, means a marriage ceremony, with its legalization, and the attendance of a crowd (with or without a "feast" or "eats") with all or most of the relatives and friends involved. Living together then completes the marriage, and we must respect and recognize this marriage, whether it be with pagans, Moslems, Jews, Christians, or anyone else!

In Matt. 19:4-6 Jesus taught the basic character

of marriage, going back to creation -- He did this before He answered the question of the Pharisees, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for any cause?" His basic answer, for all men, would be in Mark 10 verses 10 and 11; if either put away the other and marry another partner, they commit adultery. Since Jesus was talking to those who were not His disciples in Matt. 19, and since Luke 16:18 was likely in the Pharisees' hearing (see 16:14), we cannot restrict his teaching to disciples only, or Christians; the application of His statements, in answering them, would have to be "across the board" -- for all men. No man can divorce a moral and faithful wife, and then marry another woman without committing adultery. And, under the New Covenant, and Christian teaching, a woman who marries another while her husband is living commits adultery; this is stated in Mark 10:12, and implied in Matt. 5:32 ("makes her [the one divorced] commit adultery") and also the last statements of both Matt. 5:32 and Luke 16:18 "Whoever (whatever man) marries a divorced woman (or a woman put away from her husband) commits adultery."

This, then, is the general teaching of Jesus, and is much stricter than Moses' law, which permitted (though not encouraging it) both divorce and remarriage, when the woman got a bill of divorcement. We cannot evade the exception that Jesus made in Matt. 5:32 and 19:9, but all other teaching in the New Testament condemns divorce and remarriage, and greatly strengthens marriage, when obeyed.

Now, it is common to stretch, or apply the exception just mentioned way beyond what is taught there; for men are still hard-hearted and lawless, and women in these latter days are much more disloyal to their husbands and self-assertive. Observe, carefully, that the Pharisees' question is only about a man putting away his wife; it does not include the woman, for a woman could never initiate a divorce under the law; "the woman is bound by the law to her husband for as long as he lives" Rom. 7:2. Jesus' answer to

their question never contemplates or recognizes a woman remarrying while her husband lives, even if "innocent" and divorced, for "...makes her commit adultery" implies that any remarriage, for her, is adultery. The exception that Jesus made in Matt. 5:32 and 19:9 therefore, is only for the man who had an unfaithful or immoral wife (fornication is, more broadly, immorality.) For the few of you who would not allow that definition, look at I Cor. 10:8; if you check back to Numbers 25, it is certain that this was general immorality (adultery for almost all of them, for practically no Israelite was single); it would be impossible to prove that only unmarried people were involved! The Greek word is "porneia" and is not limited at all to single, or unmarried people, as it may be in the dictionary.

However, in I Cor. 7, where Paul gives us various commands and details that Jesus had not taught, there is teaching for a man who is "loosed" from a woman -- "seek not a wife." The NASV translates, "Are you released from a wife?" but the NIV completely misses the true meaning, in translating "Are you unmarried?" For the Greek is clearly "loosed away from a wife" -- loosed in the perfect tense, and could only apply to one who had been married. Does it not appear quite certain that this "loosed away from a wife" connects with the exception the Lord made back in Matt. 5:32 and 19:9? For everyone would recognize that death loosed a man from his wife, and if he was younger and had a "brood" of children, so to speak, there would certainly be no discouragement in him taking another wife. But, in the event that a man had an immoral wife, and she would not repent, then, if he put her away, it would be more understandable that the command be given him -- "seek not a wife." For, since the Lord had not blessed him with a successful first marriage, that might be a definite indication that he should spend the rest of his life single, and walk with the Lord. However, nothing legal or rigid is laid upon him, for "If thou marry, thou hast not sinned..." so we have

to recognize the exception, which the Lord made -- it was for the man.

Now, in I Cor. 7:10-11 we have a definite command from the Lord that any woman separated from her husband is to remain unmarried, or be reconciled back to her husband. This agrees perfectly with the Lord's teaching -- that a woman is caused to commit adultery if she is put away by her husband; her remarriage was clearly implied by the Lord, for if she stayed single, she would neither commit adultery, nor appear to commit it. The command in verse 11 to the woman is absolutely confirmed in verse 39, "the woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives..." She can remarry only after he dies.

Unfaithful teachers try to see in verse 15 permission for either man or woman to remarry if their partner abandons them, but what they are seeking is the unlawful permission for a woman to remarry. They would have Paul and the Lord completely contradicting themselves, for verses 11 and 39 both emphasize that a separated woman is to remain unmarried! The word for "bound" in I Cor. 7:15 is not the bound of marriage, which is "deo," and does not imply a freedom to remarry; it is a different word, meaning "enslaved;" it only means that one abandoned does not have to cook the meals, wash the clothes, or provide for the other one -- he or she does not have to pursue the one departing and try to fulfill the normal responsibilities to that one which they would have when together. God has allowed the departing one to go -- that is implied -- and the one remaining may have to live without the partner form now on -- unless he or she comes back. Verses 11 and 39 are commands to the woman; there are no exceptions for her.

Men like Guy Duty and Jay Adams wrote perverse books, permitting remarriage to a woman with a living husband and many (most) others have likewise taught contrary to the Lord's teaching. Many try to bring in the

"innocent" concept, whereas the Lord and Paul didn't even hint at any such condition. Whenever this idea is brought in, it is for the purpose of allowing a woman to be remarried while her husband lives.

We have to face the fact of adultery; continuance in any relationship that was unlawful when it began is still adultery; those continuing in it have not repented (they may be ignorant, and confused by false and wrong teaching, and God undoubtedly has mercy on them till they know better.) There may be grave doubt if they have left all to follow Christ. If there has to be separation and there are children, and /or need of support for the woman, God's people have to support fellow-believers, for whatever time is necessary, but adultery has to be forsaken, just like all other manifest and grave sins. In the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, God required those of Israel who had married heathen wives to put them away, but they spent a month getting it completed. We must assume that they were merciful and made provision for the women and children; otherwise it wouldn't have taken them that long to do it.

None of us like to deal with a remarriage situation where there is adultery, but God's commands and standards have to be upheld; we can't allow the leaven of evil to come in among our churches and among God's people. Following Jesus' and Paul's teaching will protect marriage in general, and will promote righteousness and stability among us. The exception that the Lord made probably applies to only a small percentage of remarriage situations -- the vast majority of them are unlawful and adulterous. We might ask ourselves whether we might not be lazy in dealing with sin and discipline in the church; men who are leaders are going to have to be firm and God-fearing in dealing with all situations which are serious and which threaten the health and well-being of God's people, just like a father has to be firm and faithful in dealing with his own family. Above all else, God's Name is reproached, and His

Word is despised when adultery is allowed and not dealt with!

Let us diligently seek together to honor God, and restore integrity, faithfulness, and love in marriage among us; we will also protect our young people by doing this. Amen.

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### The Christian's Agenda -- in the World

Our Lord gave us this in a 'nutshell' -- so to speak -- in Matt. 5. Though given initially to his disciples or followers in Israel, the content shows conclusively that it applies to all disciples during this age -- not in the age to come. For in due time, as unfolded in Acts, Samaritans were evangelized and became disciples, and then, not too much later, Gentiles. Rev. 7 shows the scope: "people of all nations, tribes and tongues". "You are the salt of the Earth... You are the light of the World." If the thrust of this weighty and comprehensive pronouncement is missed, then Christians may dissipate their energies and time in programs other than God's own program.

Matt. 28:19-20 aligns with this, but has to be headed and spearheaded by leaders; then they and all the disciples made and taught become the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Jesus Christ came into this 'dark' world as The Light of the World. Then He departed back to the Father in heaven, leaving His disciples to be the light. Salt is a minority ingredient in all foods and meats that it seasons -- that forbids the thought or idea that the world would be or could be Christianized. True Christians are a small minority in any century or time period. Christendom, so-called (only in the larger, more civilized nations) has always been mostly composed of professing Christians who do not know or obey the Lord. They somewhat correspond to most in the Jewish commonwealth, or nation; most of those went to the temple and sacrificed, and later, most went to the synagogues after the dispersion, but only a small remnant were the true Israel.

That One Man could be the Light of the World is astounding -- our Lord Jesus Christ was that by all His deeds -- healing, casting out demons, and even raising a few from the dead, and then by His own resurrection. But He was also that by the truth He preached and taught: God

gave Him words of Life, which He taught to the apostles, and the crowds (John 17:8). His words were 'spirit and life' (John 6:63) and are that today -- they will never pass away.

Neither salt nor light changes anything essentially. Meat remains meat, and so do vegetables, and foods seasoned by just a little salt; and the comment, "If the salt has lost its taste..." forbids the thought of preservation, or making thirsty, etc. Taste and seasoning are in focus! Light mainly illumines things, showing them clearly as they are; in the light men can work and walk functionally and without stumbling. But does the light effect any essential change? No!

From this knowledge, and even by intuition from the Holy Spirit, Christians have evangelized, practiced good works, cheerfully served their brethren and others, stayed separated from the world with its wars and strife, and tried to establish disciples in faith, hope and love -- a full-time 'agenda'. When Christians try to change the evil world out there, (Paul termed it) "this present evil age," they invariably neglect their own household -- the church. Isn't an awful degree of lukewarmness, mediocrity, and worldliness found among most Christians here in America? If so, we aren't good salt -- with full taste -- as we should be. Zeal and persistence in good works would make our light to shine brightly.

A book called "Spiritual Authority" was compiled from some of Watchman Nee's messages very late before his arrest and confinement; I would now rate it his best. In it, he has put an emphasis on obedience not seen in his former writings. He says at one point that when God secures obedience in His people, then many in the world will respond to the preaching of repentance and the Gospel. So may God put a spirit of more complete obedience in all of His people and may all good leaders among us labor in that direction. Amen.

We don't see the Lord, or the apostles ever turning aside to any reform program, or any "change the culture" emphasis; the gospel (and all its teaching), is the power of God unto salvation, and with God's full salvation in many lives, "culture" will be affected very much. I think from the time of the Puritans, the Wesleyan reviving, the early "brethren," and the Welsh reviving, the Gospel and the Bible were at the forefront in all these visitations from God. Spurgeon's contribution was most noteworthy. America has received many such visitations from God and awakenings, and still retains a respect for God's word and truth, which is much better than Europe, and probably than Britain in her present state.

But let us never forget that all the nations are still learning war, and most are plunging into immorality and in some cases, perversion of all kinds. Satan is not bound; he is loose and still raging (Peter likens him to a roaring lion) and deceiving. None of the State-church people (and only a minority of Puritans and Wesleyans 'graduated' completely out of this) realized the scope and power of Satan's kingdom; Reconstructionists are largely blinded to it. Yet our Lord Jesus plainly spoke of Satan having a kingdom; he is the "strong man" of one parable.

Early 'brethren' saw our pilgrim and stranger status better, I think, than all before them. But some among them mixed in some 'poison', as we might call bad teaching, with the many good things they taught. We need now, better men of God, than those before us, in discernment and divine wisdom, restoring the whole counsel of God for these end times. God will give them, praise His name.

#### Thoughts on the Kingdom of God -- Time of Establishment and Its Nature

These thoughts are to help Christians to have an adequate and scriptural knowledge of the Kingdom of God, into which we are translated (Colossians 1:13) and to help them avoid two extreme systems of teaching about it. Quite a group of Christians, on the one hand, stress and see, in part, the present aspect of the Kingdom, but deny a future kingdom on earth. They tend to "spiritualize" such passages as Psalm 2:6-9, Psalm 110:2, Isaiah 2 (first part), Isaiah 11, Isaiah 65 (last part) and Micah 4 (first part) and teach that they are fulfilled in a spiritual way in the Church and in this age. Another group, also sizeable, on the other hand, focus attention mostly on the future manifested kingdom of God, for which we pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Many of these tend to practically deny, ignore, or set aside the present kingdom of God, recognized as real, and actually here from the book of Acts on through the New Testament.

Just as Christians are divided in understanding, at present, into those inclined to Calvinistic teaching (or to a modified form of it), and those inclined to an Arminian view, so many are also divided as to the kingdom of God. And probably a majority of Christians (even evangelical ones) here in the United States have a very hazy and limited knowledge of the present kingdom of God -- even those nominally acknowledging it. And other hundreds tend to think overmuch in terms of a future kingdom. This latter tendency is probably more serious than the first extreme mentioned (that usually including a denial of Christ's reign on earth). For though this denial nullifies many prophecies and makes for great uncertainty in the prophetic word, yet it appears that more disobedience to Christ and carelessness may be brought about and fostered by the second extreme. For if we do not enter the kingdom of God in this time, and



then go on and do His revealed will through the Lord Jesus Christ, obeying, we will never have final entrance into His everlasting kingdom, or have any portion in that time for which we are taught to pray -- the restoration of all things under the manifest reign of Christ. Acts 3:21

Happily we need not drift or fall into an extreme position in any phase of the doctrine of Christ; the Word of God is corrective, and we can achieve a balance, and true and adequate knowledge, if we tremble at all of His Word. Let us supplicate our God and Father, and earnestly seek to hold only His truth, regardless of what our forefathers taught, or our contemporaries teach and do. For sound doctrine underlies righteousness, love, and faith; the first thing mentioned in which the early church continued is the doctrine of the apostles (Christ's doctrine). Acts 2:42

Let us consider, then, the Establishment of the Kingdom of God.

We would do well to begin with an important statement from our Lord Jesus Christ Himself: "The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." Luke 16:16. Other scriptures agreeing, this shows us that something new, something beyond the law and the prophets is now being preached; it is either already present (in one sense) or will be shortly. It superseded the law, though in moral character connected with the law (taught in Matthew 5 and later in Romans 3:31 and 8:4).

In these scriptures -- Matt. 3:2, 4:17, 10:7, Mark 1:15 and Luke 10:9, 11 we find John the Baptist, Jesus, the twelve, and the seventy whom Jesus sent out all announcing, as good news, that the kingdom of God is at hand (literally "has come near, and is near"). These were factual statements or pronouncements; I do not see that they were made in the form of an offer, or were contingent upon Israel's reception of them. Elsewhere, the Lord Jesus told the opposing Jewish leaders that the kingdom of God

would be taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. This implies, of course, that the kingdom of God would not wait for the favorable reception of it by the entire nation of Israel, or the leaders but would be established -- with fruit bearing!

In one sense, the kingdom of God was already come; namely, that of Matt. 12:22, Luke 11:20 and Luke 17:20. In these passages the Lord speaks of the kingdom of God as being present or that it had come upon them beforehand (one literal meaning of the verb in the first two texts). Comparing these passages, however, with Matt. 16:28, Mark 9:1 and Luke 9:27, it appears that the full establishment of the kingdom of God with power would come some time later, yet before the death of some standing there. We quote these last three texts below:

Matt. 16:28 "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."

Mark 9:1 "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here which shall not taste of death till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power."

Luke 9:27 "But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God."

It seems to me that we cannot face the testimony of these passages honestly without admitting that the establishment of the kingdom of God was to precede the death of some who heard these words. The "some" in all three passages probably applies to the entire group, since Mark 8:34 shows that a crowd ("people" in that verse is "crowd" in Greek) heard the discourse recorded from 8:34 to 8:38 and, no doubt, 9:1 immediately following, because there is no division apparent in Matthew, Mark, or Luke between the teaching on taking up the cross, denying self, losing one's life for Christ's sake and the gospel's, Christ's

coming in glory to reward or reject, and this announcement of the coming kingdom of God before the death of some standing there. Why this statement of our Lord about "not tasting death, till...?" I suggest the probability of this being said on the background of his teaching that "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's the same shall save it." Some hearers (even disciples) might reason, "So, Jesus, the Messiah, says that to follow Him, we must take up our cross and that if we lose our lives for His sake and the Gospel's we will save them. Will some or many of us die before He establishes his Kingdom? Did He not announce that it is near at hand? We thought Messiah would be King, and restore the kingdom to Israel." Jesus announces, however, that the kingdom of God will come in that generation, for he says that some shall not taste of death till they see it. He had, shortly before, told His own disciples of His rejection, suffering, death, and resurrection; yet He shows that the coming of the kingdom of God is sure, nevertheless; it will come with power, and the disciples will see it ("some" as I pointed out may, in the Lord's intention, include some of the crowd which heard His teaching).

Some have taught that the transfiguration was the fulfillment of the announcement of the kingdom made a few days before. They apply "some" to Peter, James, and John. However, Jesus' statement (its wording) does not seem to indicate a fulfillment of the announced kingdom as early as six days after that pronouncement -- the mention of "taste of death" would cause us to expect a later fulfillment, would it not? As I explained, I believe this announcement, recorded in three gospel records, agree with and enforce the previous announcement of the kingdom as having drawn near -- as being at hand. The other view makes the transfiguration to be (or include) just a picture or preview of a kingdom which we now know was almost 2,000 years distant; most holding this view believe the kingdom was

postponed upon the Jews' rejection of it. The reader can check, however, in Matt. 17, Mark 9 and Luke 9 and he will not find any mention of the kingdom in the actual account of the transfiguration; when Moses and Elijah appeared with the Lord Jesus, they did not talk about the kingdom (according to the record) but about His coming death at Jerusalem! The transfiguration was indeed a revelation of the personal glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, but to assume that it was a preview of a literal kingdom seems far-fetched. In II Peter 1:16, 17 where he alludes to this event, he speaks of the power, presence, and majesty of the Lord Jesus, but not of the kingdom. Perhaps the revelation of Christ's majesty was a pledge to the disciples that the announced kingdom would surely come (a king without subjects and a realm isn't a kingdom).

I believe, then, that we are to understand that the kingdom of God came with power, as predicted, on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out, and the disciples were filled with real power. Also, since Jesus had promised them in John 14:18, "I will not leave you comfortless (literally "orphans"); I will come to you" -- does not this give us a key to the phrase in Matthew 16:28 -- "the Son of man coming in his kingdom?" Since some standing there were to see the Son of man coming in His Kingdom, that prediction did not refer to His glorious second coming, for we now know that it was over 1900 years away. Let the reader also note that the Lord Jesus spent the forty days after his resurrection speaking to the disciples of the things "pertaining to the kingdom of God." Acts 1:3

Jesus taught His disciples that to them was given to know the mysteries, or secrets, of the kingdom of heaven, or kingdom of God, but not to the multitudes. In Matt. 13 He taught many parables in the hearing of the people, and then explained them in private to the disciples. They related to the kingdom of heaven (Matthew's term) and all

except three parables in that chapter have parallels in Mark or Luke where the term used is "kingdom of God". It will be seen that they all apply to this age, with mention of its end, the harvest, etc. -- not to a future age. In Matthew 13:19 the gospel is called the "word of the kingdom"; in Luke 8:11, parallel with this "the seed is the word of God." There are more places where the terms "Kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" refer to the present phase of that kingdom than to the future phase; though more evident in the gospel records, this is also true throughout the entire New Testament.

Now, in addition to the passage in Acts 1:3, let us look briefly at a few other passages through the rest of the New Testament, and we shall find that the kingdom of God is now being preached and is spoken of as a present reality.

In Acts 8:12 we see Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ. We know he must have been preaching about a present kingdom, not one far off in the future.

In Acts 19:8 we find Paul in the synagogue at Ephesus "persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God." (American St. Version)

In Acts 20:25 we find Paul coupling the preaching of the kingdom with the testifying of the gospel of the grace of God, mentioned in the verse just before, and we know, of course, that he had been preaching the kingdom all along, for he did not change his gospel at Ephesus from that previously preached.

In Acts 28:23, 31 we find Paul at the end of his recorded career in the book of Acts testifying and preaching the kingdom of God. It is significant then that we have no less than four texts from Acts 19:8 on showing that Paul habitually preached and testified of the kingdom of God with the preaching of Jesus Christ and salvation in Him.

In Romans 14:17, we read, "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy

in the Holy Ghost!"

In I Cor. 4:20 we read, "The Kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." Is not this in accord with Mark 9:1, foretelling it's coming?

In I Cor. 6:9, 10; 14:50; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5 and James 2:5, inheritance in the kingdom of God is spoken of. Both the present and future aspects of the kingdom seem to be included in the scope of all these passages.

In Col. 1:13 saints are said to be "translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love (lit.)" -- A slightly different designation, but the same kingdom.

I Thess. 2:12 is, literally, "with a view to your walking worthily of God, who calleth (pres.) you into His own kingdom and glory."

In II Thess. 1:5 we read, "...that ye may be accounted worthy of the kingdom of God, in behalf of which ye also are suffering (lit.)."

Heb. 12:28 reads "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace..." It speaks here of the present receiving of a kingdom, and is similar to the Lord Jesus' words in Luke 18:17.

In Rev. 5:9 John speaks of being a fellow-partaker with the saints in "the tribulation and the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." He here speaks, of course, of the present character of the kingdom of God, of which I shall say more later.

Let the reader understand that I do not deny a future manifested kingdom of God -- the kingdoms of the world shall become the Lord's kingdom. Rev. 11:14. The passage in Luke 13:28 surely refers to that: "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." Matt. 8:11 is parallel with this, using the term "kingdom

of heaven." The kingdom of God has begun already, but it must also come into public manifestation worldwide, to vindicate God, our Lord Jesus, and to fulfill prophecy.

There are a few other texts speaking of the kingdom of God; some refer to the future phase. But the above texts reveal clearly that the apostles preached, taught, and spoke of the kingdom of God, not as "near at hand," but now a present reality; certainly this was a substantial part of their ministry. This bears out my understanding that the kingdom of God did come with power on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out. Right here, let me say that it is not so important to fix the time of the establishment of the kingdom of God (and that is not at all my main stress) as to realize its presence and its reality for the present time and age. We should note, also, before leaving this consideration of the coming and establishment of the kingdom of God that the right reading of Rev. 1:6 is "and made us a kingdom (not "kings"), priests to God and His Father." Rev. 5:10 also shows that the redeemed from all peoples are made "a kingdom and priests." (See the American St. Version in these two texts, or Derby's New Translation.)

#### Now, the Nature and Character of the Kingdom of God

In John 18:33-37 we find Pilate asking Jesus if he was the king of the Jews, and then asking him again "Art thou a king then?" Jesus acknowledged that he was a king, and said that his kingdom was not of this world; else his servants would fight that He might not be delivered to the Jews. So the kingdom of God is first heavenly in origin and character in contrast to earth. It is a "kingdom which cannot be shaken." Matthew used the term "kingdom of heaven" mostly but also "kingdom of God."

Without defining the term at length, it might be

said that a "kingdom" must have a king, a realm, subjects, and, of course, power. We have a real King and Lord in Jesus, Who has been made both Lord and Christ, and Who has been glorified at the right hand of God. He has all authority given to Him in heaven and in earth, and is said to be "the ruler of the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5, Amer. St. Version). But the realm and rule of the kingdom of God, which Jesus said, was near, and which came, as promised, is still limited to His people. It is indeed worldwide, but composed of the minority of people who acknowledge the Lord Jesus and obey Him. But it is the only real, enduring kingdom on earth, even if not yet manifested openly. How I praise the God in heaven, and adore Him for giving me entrance and membership in the kingdom of God. This is an unspeakable privilege!

In the narrower sense, the realm of the kingdom of God consists of those born from above (John 3:3), those converted (Matt. 18:3), the poor in spirit (Matt. 5: 3), those persecuted for righteousness' sake, and for the Name of Christ (Matt. 5: 10,11), and those having forsaken the love of and pursuit of riches (Mark 10:23, Luke 18:24). But a larger sense is also given to the kingdom of God in the gospels, for in some of the parables of Matt. 13, good and bad are included, and those doing iniquity. In the Lord Jesus' interpretation he says, "The son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire." Matt. 13:41. Also, regarding the good and bad gathered by the net, "so shall it be at the end of the world (age): the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just..." Matt. 13:47, 48. Then in Matt. 25 the kingdom of heaven is likened to ten virgins, five of them are foolish and to whom the Lord finally says, "I know you not..." I understand that those termed bad, doing iniquity, and foolish are only temporarily within the framework of the kingdom, and are

not truly "sons of the kingdom" (see Matt. 13:38, Amer. St. Version or Greek). Such have no inheritance in the future kingdom of God (by "future" I mean its open manifestation in the coming age). But it appears that they are dealt with on the basis of their profession and their knowledge; they are treated as servants. Anyone who confesses Christ and is a disciple is thereby obligated to render submission and allegiance to Him as his sole Master and Lord, and to work and serve in the kingdom of God. But the majority of passages concerning the kingdom of God in the New Testament speak of it in its narrower sense -- a kingdom of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, with a glorious future inheritance, after resurrection.

A kingdom must have power, and must not be divided against itself else it will fall. The Lord Jesus manifested the power of the kingdom of God in all His miracles, showing Himself stronger than Satan, through whom all evil, sicknesses and plagues come. The same power was manifested through the apostles who did all manner of miracles, and probably more in number than those done by the Lord Jesus personally. Paul told the Corinthians that the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. Why do we not see this power manifested more fully in our day, as it was manifested fully in the ministry of the Lord Jesus, and in the early church? No doubt individuals and groups throughout the world do experience this power, in measure, by God's grace, but in our English-speaking countries it is not seen much, except as some are still born of the Spirit and are translated into God's spiritual kingdom. Part of the reason for this is that there is very little subjection to Jesus Christ as Lord, and little keeping of and continuance in all of His teaching, His commandments, and that of the apostles. The power of the kingdom is not bestowed largely on unsubject peoples, or on those neglecting or rejecting part of the doctrine of Christ and doing God's will. Another reason is that there

are multiplied divisions; Christendom, while speaking much of the kingdom of God, rejects it practically, and each division goes pretty much its own way. It is lined up with the world, also, and friendly to it; friendship with the world is enmity toward God. James 5:5. Contrarily, the kingdom of God is composed of those persecuted for righteousness' sake -- those reviled and slandered by the world (and most of Christendom) for Jesus Christ's sake. The kingdom of God is not of this world, but is heavenly and only a people with a heavenly citizenship, seeking the things above (eternal things) will know and experience its power. Only such will truly be saved from their sins. I acknowledge that the basic power of the kingdom of God in this time is in deliverance from sin, but even this is little seen in Christendom. Many claim to be "saved," but they don't say, or show what they are saved from. Some are indeed "saved" from the grosser evils, which even the world frowns on, but they remain selfish, full of racial prejudice, nationalistic, in friendship with the world, and conformed to it. Christendom sends its sons and daughters to fight each other in their wars; Roman Catholic fights Roman Catholic, Lutheran fights Lutheran, Baptist fights Baptist, Pentecostal fights Pentecostal, "brethren" fights brethren, etc. Why? Because they are either ignorant that the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, or they reject it and choose Caesar for their king. They are Americans, British, Russians, Germans, Mexicans, etc, more than they are Christians. It is sad that most are not taught obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. Will such inherit God's kingdom? Not if they continue in these things and die therein. God's kingdom is a kingdom of power because it is a unity; His subjects seek first his kingdom and righteousness. They know that they cannot serve two masters at the same time, so they serve the King of kings and Lord of lords, even Jesus Christ. He went through death and conquered, being raised the third day,

and is now glorified at God's right hand. The power of the kingdom of God is seen fully in Christ's resurrection <sup>from</sup> the dead, for if He defeated and annulled our greatest enemy, death, then all things are seen as possible in the light of that, even as He said Himself, "all things are possible to him that believeth." Praise God!

Righteousness is perhaps the foremost characteristic of God's kingdom. Paul taught that "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God," and lest any should relegate the kingdom mostly to the future, he said in Romans 14:17, "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking (lit.), but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." This is present -- it is the blessed rule of God in the lives of obedient people. (See also Rom. 5:17).

The peace and joy of the kingdom of God are of the heart and inner being, though they find partial expression in all of life also. I say partial expression because the Lord Jesus also taught, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." The complete comfort and rest of the saints awaits the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thess. 1:4-7. But we have sufficient comfort from our Heavenly Father even now, and we never despair, for He is the God of all comfort, and through the wonderful promises of the gospel we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Rom. 5:2. This is made possible because we have peace with God, having been reconciled by the death of His Son. We also have a measure of peace in the world, for "who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?" We have deliverance from the wars of the nations (if we obey Christ), the seditions, revolutions and strife -- though we will sometimes suffer some of the effects of these things, while not participating actively in them. Yes, "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Pro. 16: 7. We have joy in our inner beings, because we have hope; without a hope beyond this life, no man can have abiding joy. His

apparent joy is deceitful, and is completely dependent on circumstances of this life. Not so our joy, we know that the Creator of the universe is our Father, and all things are ours in Christ; we are promised all necessities now, and future inheritance in the presence of God and His beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in glory.

As is indicated above, the kingdom of God has much of its inheritance in the future. "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." Note that many of the promises in the so-called Beatitudes of Matt. 5 are future -- reward in heaven, etc. Elsewhere in the Scriptures we are assured that our reward shall be brought to us when our Lord comes with His angels. I am sorry that some of our brethren attempt to apply some of the promises of our future inheritance to the present time; many of these deny a future kingdom on earth. But our Lord's words stand, and those who are meek and poor in spirit now belong to His kingdom, and shall inherit the earth when He reigns visibly and manifestly. Let the sinners fight for the earth (their little corners of it) but let us, brethren, not despise our Lord's promise, but continue in meekness and separation unto Him, and finally we shall inherit. In connection with an inheritance largely future, let us note John's words in Rev. 1:9, "I, John, who also am your brother, and companion, in the tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience (endurance, Greek) in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." We see here the connection of the kingdom with tribulation and endurance. A large part of this tribulation will come in the days ahead (probably) because true Christians will let the world know that they have another king, "one Jesus" (Acts 17:7). Happily, there have been true Christians since the time of the apostles who put the kingdom of God first, and would not serve nor fight for "Caesar," and many of them were martyred for it. Now, as we are nearing the end, nationalism is growing in

almost all the countries of the world, and they are nearly all attempting to enlist the service and allegiance due to God alone (as Creator and Sustainer). I hear that there are detailed plans in this country to conscript practically everyone and everything possible, even to the work and service of women and children, in event of all-out war. Such, dear reader, is what the kingdoms of this earth are coming to -- pretending continual progress, but actually giving to their dupes strife, confusion, violence and despair. They talk of liberty and have their periods of material prosperity, and cessation of strife for a time, but none can promise righteousness, and settled peace and joy.

Reader, settle it in your heart that God has an answer to the world's situation -- that answer is the KINGDOM OF GOD, and I believe God will enable His children to bear a powerful testimony to this kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ before the end. Iniquity is ripening, ready for its final manifestation in this age in the Man of sin, but God says that the path of the righteous (ones) will shine and grow brighter until the perfect day (or "until the day be fully come") Pro. 4:18. Though it be but a remnant that stand for the Lord, and compose His kingdom at any time during this age, and also in the very end of it, yet a testimony will be given to that kingdom by lips and by consecrated lives. Some of us will stand before rulers for this testimony.

Now for a few final words on the importance of living as citizens and members of the kingdom of God, and preaching and teaching the same. We have seen that it definitely has a present phase, and is a present reality. It has come, as the Lord Jesus promised, and has been established. We have seen its character in considerable detail, noticing that its rewards are largely future and that there is also a future manifestation. These thoughts have been to set forth the reality of God's kingdom, announced by the Lord Jesus, as now present, while not denying

a future reign on earth, as prophesied, especially in the prophets of the Old Testament.

Probably two conditions current in these days are the main reasons, which necessitate a definite, clear-cut testimony to God's kingdom, and its everlasting character. First, is the prevalent lack of subjection to the entire teaching of the Lord Jesus and to Himself. His teaching, of course, is joined with the apostles' doctrine (teaching), that being a development and extension of His own words. "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven (final entrance, apparently -- in contrast with initial entrance by new birth), but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matt. 7:21. The love of God is defined as keeping His commandments, and John tells us plainly in I John 2 that anyone who professes to know Him, and doesn't keep Christ's commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him. Hence, dear reader, the importance of realizing that you, if a Christian, are in a kingdom where subjection and obedience are required; they are not optional. The Lord Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to all those obeying Him. (Heb. 5:9.) The second condition current here is shameful division and lack of real unity among most Christians. A kingdom divided cannot stand. Denominational Christendom is doomed; so also any federation without subjection to Jesus Christ as Lord. No individual denomination or movement can bring unity - the unity of the faith; such is not the kingdom of God. I challenge you, dear reader, seek first and only God's kingdom and righteousness; remember that the whole world lies in the wicked one. Honor and submit to rulers, never resisting them, but do not serve "Caesar" or become his or anyone's servants -- you belong to Christ who purchased you with His precious blood. Christ is our King and Lord; you cannot serve two masters at once. Earthly rulers are dying men, but Jesus Christ lives forever! God's kingdom

is the only everlasting kingdom. And for us, who preach and teach the gospel and God's Word, there is no full proclamation or setting forth of the whole counsel of God without preaching and teaching the kingdom of God; this we must do with preaching and teaching the Name of Jesus Christ and remission of sins and salvation through faith in His Name.

As a sort of postscript to this article, I would add that I was helped a few years ago by hearing a simple definition on what the kingdom of God is -- the Rule of God among men. This definition is not all comprehensive, of course, but it does give perhaps the most simple and inclusive definition of any one statement. It helps in such a statement, as "whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter therein." It also helps us to understand the importance of having and walking by the Holy Spirit of God, so that we may experience Romans 14:17. Without the Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives, there cannot be the rule of God in actuality. Those groups who teach a system of salvation without the message of the Kingdom cannot expect complete maturity and obedience among their people, and their obedience gradually deteriorates. With this their expectation concerning actual salvation from sin in their lives and their expectation for healing is weak. Brethren, let us not deny the power of God, for that power is as great and as available to faith as at any time in the past history of God's people. In these latter days when iniquity abounds, and the love of many grows cold, we are going to need greater power to stand, and we are going to need greater faith and expectation from the God and Father of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. May such be true of the readers of this article, to the praise and glory of God!

### **The Kingdom of God: The Great New Testament Theme**

I don't want to be misunderstood by the title above, for the theme of John's Gospel undoubtedly is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. But in the first three Gospels, the theme is the Kingdom of God -- it has come near, it will be preached until the end of the age, it goes beyond the Law and the Prophets, men can and must enter it, and it will be inherited by the righteous. Then later, when many have obeyed the gospel and entered the Kingdom, it is described by Paul as "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit."

The Kingdom of God is not a timeless entity -- an abstraction! It is a reality that came with the first coming of Jesus Christ, and His ministry. In Mark 1:14, 15 we read, "After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' He said, (is fulfilled A.V.) 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.'" Luke later records Jesus as saying, "The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presses into it." I quoted from both Mark and Luke to show the time element in the coming of the kingdom of God. I will say more about its present reality in Acts and onward, for it is never preached as 'having come near' after the Gospels!

The Law and the prophets could never bring the kingdom of God; Jesus Christ alone could bring it. The preparation is followed by the reality! Briefly, let me say that: a) God began a redemptive plan with Abraham. b) David's and Solomon's reigns (in a redeemed nation) foreshadowed the real kingdom of God, but did not result in a people who 'all knew God, and were taught of Him.' c) There had always been a 'behind-the-scenes' kingdom of God and God's control over the nations, illustrated



by Deuteronomy 32:39, 40, Daniel 2:44, Isaiah chapters 40-45 and passages from the Psalms like 103:19, 115:3, 135:6, 145:11-13. d) But the kingdom Jesus announced and preached could only come in the fullness of time -- at the most propitious hour and moment (Roman rule, Greek language all over the Mediterranean area, and Israel in great need in every way, etc.) So we need to see that the Kingdom of God was a 'new' entity, coming into the earth.

So Jesus was *not* preaching what I dealt with under c. above; that had always been true, and will always be true; God is the Creator and Maker of all things -- along with the Word, and he stays in control of all He has made! No, Jesus was announcing a new thing, which would also be 'subjective (real in men's experience)' in and among men; they would be truly under the rule of God, in a moral and spiritual way! This was a "kingdom of heaven"; it came from heaven to earth, and had a supernatural character. Ultimately, the kingdom would have to be 'with power' -- first spiritually (for a long period of time) and then -- over all the earth. But in its initial character, and manifestation in the world, it came in meekness and lowliness; Mary, a poor, lowly woman was chosen to give birth to the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, and he grew up in a small-despised town in Galilee. He came at a time when Israel, a 'non-entity' among the nations, was in captivity to Rome; although a descendant of David, He grew up as a carpenter's son, with no "credentials" from the Pharisees, scribes, or Sadducees, leaders in Israel. But after His baptism by John, He entered His ministry, anointed by the Holy Spirit, and began to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. He chose and disciplined common men - fishermen, tax collectors, etc. to follow and later carry on God's program but He had no army, printing press, nor any other human promotion backing up His ministry of healing, preaching and teaching.

a. Jesus cast out demons and healed all kinds of

sicknesses and plagues, "If I, with the finger of God, cast out demons, then has the Kingdom of God come upon you." He also calmed a bad storm, killed an unfruitful fig tree, walked on water, and showed His power over nature and the elements.

b. He delegated some of the same power to the apostles.

c. He predicted the coming of the Kingdom with power before the death of some who heard Him. (Mark 9:1)

d. He was tempted by Satan, and He revealed that Satan had a kingdom in the earth, a kingdom of deceit, oppression, and darkness.

e. He taught the character, and ethics of the Kingdom of God in Matthew 5, 6, and 7, and spoke about a future day of reckoning, before God -- a day of judgment. And then, toward the end of His earthly ministry, He gave us our basic outline of how this age would develop, and what conditions would be at its end. The parable of the Sower and the seed in Matthew 13 (also in Mark 4 and Luke 8) shows how the Kingdom would spread and develop -- by the preaching of God's Word in the Gospel, and by making disciples. Matthew 24:14 gives a "time-frame" -- The Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached throughout the world, and then the 'end' will come.

Why was repentance preached, along with the message of the Kingdom? Because men are sinful -- many in rebellion against God, instead of submitting to and obeying Him. "All have sinned, and are coming short of the glory of God"; "There is none who does good, no, not even one." The Lord Himself in Luke 13:3 and 5 had said, "Unless you repent, you, too, will all perish." So all men (children, too) need to repent, to enter and live in the Kingdom. So, the Kingdom of God is something we enter, live in, and learn obedience and submission to God in. It is where we experience and receive salvation, or deliverance

-- from the deceit, temptation, and oppression of Satan! But, during this age, it is accompanied by persecution and hatred by the world; Christ blessed those so persecuted in the last two Beatitudes, and in all of His teaching.

Wherein is the need for stressing the Kingdom of God today? It is because of so many perversions and so much incompleteness in the past, in the realm of Christendom and Christianity. Let me itemize a few (for, to give help, correction, or healing, there must be recognition of the problem:

1. In the U.S. today, the idea is rampant that one gets eternal life, mainly by a decision, or one crisis experience; then you have it forever!

2. "Church Truth" has almost completely dominated among Christians, even in the Bible schools, and seminaries. So there is tremendous vagueness and uncertainty about the Gospel of the Kingdom, and the reality of the present Kingdom of God. But God is making this real to some.

3. Most Christians have been taught to be 'patriotic' -- to their Gentile nation, instead of to Christ and the Kingdom of God. God is a jealous God; we can't serve Him *and* anything or anyone else!

4. It is widely acknowledged, in America, that there is little real deliverance from sin and its power -- especially in the areas of family, morality and faithfulness in marriage, honesty and integrity and deliverance from materialism, and being victimized by the 'rat race.'

5. There has been great stress on spiritual gifts, and the 'baptism of (or in) the Holy Spirit'; some of this is healthy, and needed, but it must always eventuate in living obediently in the Kingdom of God, without the pursuit of power and signs! And all of us must 'look off' (Greek) unto Jesus, glorified up at the right hand of God, as the 'Finisher' as well as the Author of our salvation. We pursue

righteousness, faith, and love.

6. Some degree of obedience has been taught, and some are stressing holiness, and a few are staying separated from the world, but all of this seems to be in great feebleness in most places. Kingdom-consciousness will definitely bring strength, and better obedience, for submission and obedience are concepts and realizations *integral* in the word Kingdom. John Bright wrote one of the more influential books on the Kingdom of God; I personally think he did not adequately contrast the Kingdom with the Law and the Prophets (Luke 16:16) and stress the much more complete and higher character of the Kingdom. George Ladd has come along later, and with "The Gospel of the Kingdom" has greatly improved on Bright, I think. He gives us our best basic (objective) outline of the Kingdom and its *time element*; he's somewhat weak on separation from the world, as are most Protestant authors. Ladd sees the present character of the Kingdom, plus the future aspect, better than any writer I am familiar with.

Pentecostal, 'holiness' and other believers hardly see the objective and time character of the Kingdom at all; the kingdom of God is 'within you,' they quote not noticing that Jesus is talking to the Pharisees, and answering a question -- also 'you' is 'you all -- plural' and not singular. Jesus and His disciples (and God's power manifested through them) were the manifestation of the kingdom to Israel and its leaders -- sealed and proven later by His resurrection from the dead, and by the continuing manifestation of God's power through the apostles, both in men's salvation, and in the many miracles of healing and deliverance.

Near the beginning of this study I mentioned that the coming and nearness of the Kingdom of God are never preached in Acts and onward. Check the following verses: 8:12, 19:8, 20:24, 25 and 28:23, 31; all through Acts the

Kingdom of God is preached -- along with forgiveness of sins and salvation through Jesus Christ alone -- as a *present reality*; it has come! Men, hundreds and thousands are being called to and are entering this present kingdom, and leaving the darkness and Satan's kingdom behind. Jesus had said in Luke 16:16, "...and every man *presses* into it." Many more press into and enter the Kingdom through the Acts period; it has "come with power." (Mark 9:1) But, in stressing this, let me assure you scholars that this does not necessitate a 'realized eschatology' -- that tends to minimize and downgrade what will take place at Christ's glorious Coming and Manifestation!

Along with a stress on the present character of the Kingdom of God, we also need to stress that we still "walk by faith, and not by sight" -- this is a kingdom which cannot be seen or observed by men's natural sight or intellectual abilities; "Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed." All the way to the end of the age, it is linked with suffering -- "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." It is international or non-national -- "...if my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews" -- Jesus had said before His crucifixion. It is composed of those who have become like little children -- free from guile, malice, hate, and quick to trust God. Perhaps the ethical character of the Kingdom of God is summed up most clearly by Paul in Romans 14:17 -- "The Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." The last clause 'in the Holy Spirit' would be a good demonstration that it is a spiritual kingdom during this age; the first Beatitude would confirm this!

But, since all the nations are deceived and learning war, and practicing it, and the whole world is increasingly filled with immorality, violence, pride and vanity, then we ought to recognize that the petition which the Lord taught

us, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," cannot be answered by the fact of a present kingdom of God in the world -- it will be answered when the Lord Jesus returns, and the kingdom of the world becomes the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. (Rev. 11:15) Only the Glorious Coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ will bring the "restoration of all things," and not until then can "the knowledge of the glory of the Lord cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea!" (Hab. 2:14)

God, in the Gospel, calls us into the present kingdom of God to learn, live by faith, grow spiritually and suffer, in preparation for ruling and reigning with Christ; "if we suffer, we shall reign with Him."

So, more could be added, but the above is an outline of the present Kingdom of God, its coming, its character, and its destiny. Daniel 7 had shown its destiny, long before the first coming of Christ and the New Testament, and the prophetic portions of the New Testament agree perfectly with the predictions of Daniel; Jesus Christ and the overcomers will rule and reign forever and ever!

#### Western Christendom

If we have read any or various histories of Christianity in the West, it has carried us through the "Dark Ages," medieval times, and through Roman Catholic domination and power, then through the Reformation period up until now.

The gospel began going westward and into Europe when Paul was called over into Macedonia by a vision, and went with God's power and blessing. Why the main stream of God's grace went westward (if we are right in analyzing, and thinking) is a mystery in God's untraceable ways (see Romans 11:33). Also, why God allowed the power of Rome to so develop and become strong and dominant, needs prayerful and careful discernment and analysis by renewed minds!

The Reformation of the 16th century was certainly

a beginning move of God to bring the "little flock" of the Lord back to His truth and holiness. The God of all grace would not let Rome's power multiply forever, but would restore to His people His truth and faith's proper place, with hope and love. Christ would more and more truly become the Author and Finisher of the Faith. But it has been gradual -- perhaps like the weaning of the early Jewish church away from the temple and the preparatory Judaism. They stayed "zealous of the Law" -- probably till the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The book of Hebrews may have been circulated widely by then, but probably not too long. There was no wickedness in staying "zealous of the Law"; they just needed "weaning" and steady growth in the full liberty and glory of Christian faith and grace. They were fulfilling the righteousness of the Law.

The Reformation came through and along with an available (through printing) and open Bible. An open Bible with its revelation of faith and grace makes possible a return to the Truth, however gradual that may seem to be; there is steady progress in the brightening "path of the righteous" (Proverbs 4:18).

Two books in modern times are especially important to English-speaking Christians: 1. *The Pilgrim Church*, by E. H. Broadbent, 2. *The Torch of the Testimony* by Kennedy; there may be one or two in German or French. These show that God had holy and separated believers down through all the past ages since Christ -- obedient and under reproach and persecution by the world.

State churchism developed since Constantine, and was strong and dominant in Europe. But even in that a "free church" movement arose, and became dominant in America; truth can grow and prosper in free churches. Small groups like Waldensians, Bogomils, Albigenses, and the Anabaptists of the 16th century functioned outside of the state churches, and usually obeyed Christ better, and

received persecution; that was most savage in the 16th century, and many times worse than that of Pagan Rome!

Europe was evangelized comparatively early and also North Africa, but most of Africa, the Indian sub-continent and most of Asia much later. God kept His people reminded of His purpose to take the Gospel to all nations and peoples, and the Protestant church began speeding that up in the late 1700s, and greatly speeding it through the 1800s; steam ships went tremendously faster through the later 1800 period. But even then, South America has been evangelized mostly in the 1900s, though Roman Catholics brought a corrupt and paganized surface knowledge of the Bible, God and Christ from the 1500s and onward.

It appears to some of us that America would have moved steadily away from God, apart from His "awakenings" that He gave, for only six or seven percent attended churches in the time of the Revolution. But a strong awakening was granted through Jonathan Edwards ahead of the Revolution, and several afterwards; some very strong and like a harvest. Baptists and Methodists were raised up for Evangelism and great numbers obeyed the Gospel, and changed the character of the nation. "Going to church" on Sundays became a fixed practice for the British and Americans through the late 1700s into the 1900s, but by 2000 Britons have abandoned that more than Americans. Both nations are pursuing soft living and pleasure, but Americans have a large core of true Christians -- still biblically oriented, and professing to believe and obey the Gospel and honor and follow Jesus Christ as Messiah and Lord. Bibles and testaments are still being published and distributed in the millions, even in other languages!

But evangelicals and "fundamentalists" are mostly conformed to the world; they are materialistic and very "short" on the good works God has appointed for them; they have not cultivated or obtained pure hearts, but have

let lust and immorality come in among them, so repentance is needed among most. Many marriages have failed, but can be restored by Godly sorrow and repentance. The reproofs of Revelation 2 and 3 are needed everywhere -- the fear of God will be restored among the remnant, for God's purpose for us in Ephesians 4 will be fulfilled, as well as our Lord's prayer in John 17. Christendom - the large professing church, will not repent, so we, in substantial numbers, have come out to our Lord, and we are being sanctified in and by God's Word, the Truth (John 17:17).

Judaism, or the Jewish nation, as a whole has been judged for its rebellion and forsaking God, and especially for rejection and crucifying their own Messiah; Christendom, as led by Rome and all apostate churches and leaders will also be judged by our Lord Jesus Christ -- He will judge the world "in righteousness!"

Early "brethren" in England came out of various denominations in about 1830, and became strong for a time, having teachers of great ability. They stressed being Biblical and laying aside the many traditions of men, which forbears had "picked up." I owe much to them. But they didn't adequately warn against self-righteousness, and "pride of knowledge" and they later (gradually, but steadily) fell into such a low teaching and state of "easy-believism" that some of them are apostatizing worse than Christendom around them. We need constant renewal (revival) among us, and that can only come through the "whole counsel of God" -- "assemblies" no longer have that among themselves!

So, Christians can't just come out to some movement; we must come out (outside the camp) to a risen Christ and Savior, and the Kingdom of God! We come out and fellowship with the obedient -- those calling on the name of the Lord out of a pure heart (II Timothy 2:22). We will need constant exhortation to keep us from the

self-righteousness, which will tempt us; we will need good teaching to stimulate us to the good works, which display a good, and "Great Salvation!"

So shall we move steadily toward the "unity of the faith" Ephesians 4:13-15. Amen!

### Modest Apparel in Christian Teaching -- Exactly What Does It Mean?

This concept, and the practices flowing out from this concept, is actually rooted in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, though the phrase "modest apparel" comes from I Timothy 2:9. (KJV) Where, then, is it rooted in the Lord's own words?

"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." One of the results of the fall, when Adam disobeyed God and brought sin and all its consequences into the world, is that man's imagination became evil, and he was filled with evil desires and lust, which lead to immorality, perversion, violence, murder, war, etc. This prevalence of evil desires and imaginations, with violence, so defiled mankind in the early days of the world, that God brought the universal flood upon an ungodly world, and saved eight people with righteous Noah, through the ark!

The Law, though "just and holy and good" could not create pure hearts in men -- it could only make men more aware of their sins, and shut them up to seek God, or make them ready for His grace, when He sought them. But now, the glorious gospel brings the blessings of pure hearts, meekness, peace doing, mercy, and the other blessings spoken of in the "Beatitudes." Through repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. We become a new creation, and God's laws are now written on our hearts. We get a new heart of flesh, in place of a hard and stony heart. Praise the Lord! Through the gospel, we "become" (the Greek necessitates this word in 2 Cor. 5:21) the righteousness of God in Christ! God's righteousness needs to be personified on the earth, just as His righteousness and salvation were personified in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah had prophesied, "My salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed" a few hundred years before

Christ, and we now know that these two terms were not just in the abstract -- they were fulfilled in the Person and Ministry of Jesus Christ!

Women, then, are to be adorned first of all with meek and quiet spirits (in the sight of God, of GREAT PRICE), then with good works, and the wearing of "modest apparel." It is truly surprising how few of our leaders have spelled out what this means; they have been nothing less than delinquent! All you have to do is consult a Young's Concordance, which usually gives the Greek and Hebrew words right in the text (without going to the back of the Concordance) and shows the word for "apparel" to be "katastole." He gives the literal meaning of this word to be "long robe," for the preposition "kata" means down in many connections, and it accentuates other words when it is affixed to them. Therefore, "long garments," or "long dresses" is a fair modern equivalent for "long robe." All short and abbreviated garments on women violate this requirement! This includes shorts, shorts and halter outfits, bikinis, and all revealing and seductive clothing -- or the lack of it!

How will men be able to have and maintain pure hearts if they are surrounded by women in immodest apparel -- shorts, short dresses, etc? It is much harder - just ask some of them. I am not saying it is impossible, for many men are given grace to have pure hearts, even in our present situation, and that since the '60s, when scanty clothing began to be a real scourge in these United States. So men are not to be tempted -- at least by Christian women, lest they be lusting after them in their hearts, and thereby be defiled. Probably almost the first major defilement in the hearts and lives of boys and men is when they lust after girls or women who are not to be their wives; does this not highlight the need for all Christians to dress modestly and carefully? Here is a secondary consideration in regard to the phrase, "modest apparel." I

believe teachers and leaders often have to "spell out" what phrases and words like these mean, for most of the weaker Christians tend to leave the meaning very vague, and "in limbo" so to speak.

Many other things defile the heart, of course -- hidden covetousness is probably as pervasive, or more, in America. Let us all attain to purity of heart. Amen.

## The Two Covenants By A. Murray

P. 52, 3rd Paragraph

"If a New Covenant were to be made and if that was to be better than the Old, this was the one thing to be provided for. No New Covenant could be of any profit unless provision was made for recurring *obedience*. *Obedience* there must be. God as *Creator* could never take His creatures into His favor and fellowship, except they obeyed Him. The thing would have been an impossibility. If the New Covenant is to be better than the old; if it is to be an everlasting covenant never to be broken, it must make some sufficient provision for securing the obedience of the covenant people."

And this is indeed the glory of the New Covenant, the glory that He calleth, that this provision has been made. In a way that no human thought could have *devised*, by a stipulation that never entered into any human covenant, by an undertaking in which God's infinite condescension and power and faithfulness are to be most wonderfully exhibited, by a supernatural mystery of Divine wisdom and grace, the New Covenant provides a guarantee, not only for God's faithfulness, *but for man's too!!* And this is no other way than by God Himself undertaking to secure man's part as well as His own. Do try and get hold of this.

P. 108, end of 1st Paragraph

The Old Covenant proved the need and pointed out the path of holiness; the New inspires the love, and gives the power of holiness.

In connection with this change, a serious and most dangerous mistake is often made. Because in the New Covenant, obedience no longer occupies the place it had in the Old, as the condition of the Covenant and free grace has taken its place, justifying the ungodly, and bestowing gifts on the rebellious, many are under the impression

that obedience is now no longer as indispensable as it was then. The error is a terrible one. The whole Old Covenant was meant to teach the lesson of the absolute and indispensable necessity of obedience for a life in God's favor. The New Covenant comes not to provide a substitute for that obedience in faith, but through faith to secure the obedience, by giving a heart that delights in it, and has the power for it. And men abuse the free grace, which without our own obedience accepts us for a life of new obedience, when they rest content with the grace, without the obedience it is meant for. They boast of the higher privileges of the New Covenant, while its chief blessings -- the power of a holy life, a heart delighting on God's law, and a life in which God causes and enables us, by His indwelling Spirit, to keep His commandments, is neglected. If there is one thing we need to know well, it is the place obedience takes in the New Covenant!

Let our first thought be: *Obedience is essential.* At the very root of the relation of a creature to his God, and of God admitting the creature to His fellowship, lies the thought of obedience. It is the only thing God spoke of in Paradise when "the Lord God commanded the man" not to eat of the forbidden fruit. In Christ's great salvation, it is the power that redeemed us. "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." In the promise of the New Covenant it takes the first place. God engages to circumcise the hearts of His people in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ -- to Love God with all their heart, and to obey His commandments. The Crowning gift of Christ's exaltation was the Holy Spirit, to bring salvation to us as an inward thing. The first Covenant demanded obedience, and failed because it could not find it. *The New Covenant was expressly made to provide for obedience* to a life in the full experience of the New Covenant blessing; obedience is essential.

P. 110

*Obedience is possible.* The thought of a demand which man cannot possibly render cuts at the very root of true hope and strength...Obedience *is* possible; the whole New Covenant promises and secures this.

P.111

*This obedience is of faith.* "By faith, Abraham obeyed." ...Faith knows that the new heart is in us, that the love of God's law is our very nature, that the teaching and power of the Spirit are within us. Such faith knows it can obey.

P. 112

And, last of all, let us understand: *Obedience is blessing.* To have the voice of God, teaching, and guiding you to be united to God in willing what He wills in working out what He works in you by His Spirit, in doing His Holy will, and pleasing Him -- surely all this is joy unspeakable and full of glory.



#### His Name Shall Be Called...Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6)

Though the above title, or name, is the last in the list in that series of wonderful designations of Who our Lord Jesus Christ is, it is still tremendously important, and ought to govern many of our attitudes and actions right now in this present evil age. It is true that He will not establish universal peace here in the earth until He comes back in power and glory, but He did leave His peace with us, as He told the apostles in John 14:27. How frequently Christians have forfeited part or much of that peace, down through the ages!

Most evangelicals are quite well taught on the peace that Christ made between God and ourselves by His one perfect offering for our sins when He died and shed His blood, and that we are justified by faith alone, apart from the works of the law, or our own works, and consequently, have peace with God. But, often, that peace is not manifested fully in their lives and attitudes, as in the many divisions in Christendom, and the lack of a good outward unity among all Christians. Also, we have to notice that many Christians have a lot of inner conflict, and lack of confidence toward God in our time; part of the cause for this must be a lack of inner peace, or the ability to maintain it.

The second attribute stated that characterizes the Wisdom that is from above is "peaceable" -- first "pure," then "peaceable." So it is very important that Christians be peaceable people. And in regard to our relationships with our neighbors and other people, it is stated, even back in the Old Testament, "When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." (Pro. 16:7)

If Christ left His peace with us, it has to be a superlative kind of peace -- far above even the best that the world around us can conceive of. For it is written of

the wicked, "...the way of peace they have not known." We must remember that all the nations around us insist on having armies and navies, and training their men for war. Do you realize why this is? It is because they have no living and vital faith in God, therefore, they live in a certain amount of fear, always ready to strive for what they want, and always ready to defend what they have acquired -- really living as though God doesn't exist! Jesus, in His basic teaching to us, said, "After all these things the nations diligently seek (or, "go after"; the word seek has a prefix attached to it, indicating an "all-out" feverish pursuit of material things). Contrary to this, we Christians are told to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all that we need would be added to us. So, putting God and His kingdom first, is necessary if we would avoid the restlessness that characterizes the American way of life, and really have the peace that Christ left with us.

Each Christian needs to be diligent to remain free from the love of money, for that kind of love is a root of every kind of evil. All of the society around is more or less contaminated with the love of money; I fear that many Christians are compromising in what they work at, for the sake of the money they make; may God lead all of us only in lawful kinds of work, which in no way harms our neighbors. An illustration of what I am thinking about would be participating in selling these frothy, pornographic magazines that are in all the large discount stores, and most of the grocery stores; would it not be better for a Christian never to work in these stores, especially at the checkout lanes, where the sales are actually made? And tobacco, wine and liquor are now sold in all large stores.

The "Anabaptists" of the 16th century were possibly the first really large group of Christians who manifestly lived in, and showed, the peace that Christ leaves us to the world. At least, they were the first large group living this way, after the church became worldly, and from the

time of Constantine. They took seriously the matters of discipleship and obedience toward the Lord, trying to obey Him in everything; this obedience was not manifest among the Catholics and Protestants, consequently the latter were embroiled in most of the wars of their time, even fighting and killing among themselves.

Will the peace that Christ left with us keep <sup>from</sup> us the wars of the Gentiles? Yes, if we are obedient in all things. We will start by not allowing our sons or daughters to train for war, for that would be conforming to the ungodly world, and denying our faith in God. Those who train for war nearly always fall into it later; King Asa in the Old Testament was told when he forsook the faith that he has showed formerly, that from that time on he would have wars, and so it came to pass.

A big factor is that we do not dare follow completely those who appear to be evangelical leaders - especially TV and radio preachers; practically none of them are wholly committed to absolute obedience to Jesus Christ, and avoiding the patriotism (idolatry) and national loyalty, which go along with war and its misery. One of them, a very efficient communicator, said he would die for this country; most are not that outspoken and vocal, but many have the very same attitude, which this man boldly declared.

Jesus blessed the "peace doers," for that is the larger meaning of "peacemakers." The latter term in our English language usually has in the forefront the thought of arbiters, go-betweens, or umpires, whereas the word in Greek takes in the whole gamut of life and action -- those who practice and live in peace in every area of their lives -- without any "moratoriums." If those caught in war and danger of death gets mercy or deliverance, it is not because of their obedience, but in spite of it. It is God's sheer mercy. And, the Beatitude says that peace doers will be called sons of God, which may explain in part why so few Christians have

seen and acted on this principle and commandment. Most seem content to remain children, while sons is in some sense in contrast to just remaining children; the term means that they have grown up enough to show much of the likeness of their Heavenly Father, Who is also called the God of peace.

Practicing peace involves abstention from all work in making arms, munitions and weapons of destruction; it probably would also keep us from so-called "defense" activities in time of war. Part of our confidence is in Peter's question, "And who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?" "God is our refuge and strength" -- never the armies of the Gentiles!

So let us show to the nations right now that our Lord is indeed "THE PRINCE OF PEACE."

### Reasons Why Christ Came Into the World

Most Christians could think of several reasons why Christ came into the world, but probably would not think of some that are also very important. Many direct statements by the Lord Himself, and plainly implied statements, are to be found throughout the Scriptures. We will try to compile as many of these reasons as possible, making comments at times, to get a comprehensive grasp of (1) why Christ came, and (2) why God sent Him. We will attempt to present the most important reasons first.

#### To Fulfill the Law and the Prophets

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." Matthew 5:17.

Jesus taught this very early in the Sermon on the Mount. We know that many would think of Him as an imposter and bringer of something new and novel... therefore not properly connecting Him and His message with the prophetic Scriptures.

Therefore, it is very important that we connect the O.T. Scriptures with the N.T. Christianity is the fulfillment of God's dealing with mankind. It is not a NEW religion!

First of all, let us define "fulfill." The word meant "to complete", to satisfy certain requirements; to bring an end to; to finish, as a period of time -- a course of procedure. I think the word has more to do with the prophecies of the law and the prophets rather than fulfillment in the sense of keeping the law. However, Jesus Christ was the first man on the earth to perfectly keep God's law; this constituted Him as The Spotless Lamb of God. Thus He offered Himself a perfect sacrifice for sins, and bore the sins of all His people, since He had no sins of His own. He is the antitype (fulfillment) of all the O.T.

sacrifices for sin.

He came preaching the Word of God -- the Kingdom of God. He came healing, delivering from Satan's power, teaching. Therefore, Isaiah 35:5, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped," was being literally fulfilled in Matthew 11:5, "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them."

More important than this, however, is that God had condemned "sin in the flesh by sending His Son: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." Romans 8:3, 4. Now redeemed, reconciled men would have their hearts and lives filled with God's love.

Thus, saved from their sins, Christians would have the law fulfilled in them by the grace and enabling of God. (Refer to Romans 8:4). The Kingdom of God has come as a moral reality -- God's actual rule in and among men through new birth and the Holy Spirit.

The incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification of Jesus Christ are the historical events, which made possible the new covenant.

#### To Call Sinners to Repentance

"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Luke 5:32. Similar passages are: Matthew 9:13, "...for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." And Mark 2:17, "...I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

If you will recall, last week we talked about Christ's coming to fulfill the law and the prophets. Today we will

consider man's need for repentance (a change of mind and attitude, necessarily involving the heart and inner being) toward God that He might be reconciled back to God, for God being holy, must deal with sin and punish sin.

In Isaiah 53, ONE is prophesied about who is wounded for the people's transgressions; He is bruised for their iniquities; God has laid on Him the iniquity of them all. His soul is made an offering for sin; He bears the sins of many; also by His knowledge He justifies many, and He makes intercession for the transgressors.

The prophecies of Isaiah 53, alluded to here, are usually thought of in connection with forgiveness of sin, and pardon for sin. We will treat more directly of that later in connection with passages like I Timothy 1:15, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am the chief." But we can be sure that all of this had a connection with calling men to repentance.

The Gospel, or good news, has always had the promise of forgiveness connected with it. Jesus spoke forgiveness to several, while on earth, though He had not yet died and given Himself as the perfect sacrifice for sins. In the Apostle's message, as recorded in Acts, forgiveness of sins is usually mentioned, and is prominent.

The basis of God's forgiveness (the redemption that is in Christ Jesus) is explained in detail in the Epistles, beginning in Romans 3. For how could man be called to repentance effectively if he did not have forgiveness of the sins that were past? Would they not burden his conscience and keep him defiled?

Yes, Christ's call to repentance implied forgiveness, even where it was not clearly or explicitly stated. He did not come teaching this first, since it is not an end in itself. The END is that men are reconciled back to God, being separated from their sins and their depraved natures, and then know Him, serve Him, and delight in Him.

Forgiveness of sins begins to be developed and promised in the prophets, especially in passages like Isaiah 1, and Ezekiel 18, but it is inseparably joined with repentance. Verse 18 of Isaiah is immediately followed by verses 19 and 20 both of which demand repentance and obedience.

Ezekiel 18 shows that any wicked man can live, if he turns back and does what is lawful and right; thus free forgiveness is clearly implied -- summed up in the last verse: "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord Jehovah: wherefore turn yourselves, and live." (A.S.V.)

Christ came, therefore, to call sinners to repentance, and thus to righteousness and fellowship with God the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. And praise the Lord, He is still calling men to this, and doing it effectively for He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

#### To Seek and to Save the Lost

"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." Luke 19:10. Several O.T. passages are needed to give background to this statement by our Lord Jesus Christ. In Jeremiah 50:6, we read, "My people have been lost sheep, their shepherds have caused them to go astray..." Isaiah 53:6, better known, reads, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned away every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Then the whole 34th chapter of Ezekiel deals with Israel and their leaders and the figures of sheep and shepherds -- they are scattered and lost, and their leaders have been utterly faithless toward them. The shepherds have fleeced the sheep and fed and taken care of themselves only.

Now, listen to this wonderful promise in Ezekiel

34:11, 12 which is to be fulfilled in measure by our text above by the coming and ministry of Jesus Christ, "For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I myself, even I, will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep..." (A.S.V.) The first applications of these passages have to be to the nation of Israel, for God had been with and among them since the day when He took them out of the land of Egypt. Paul told a crowd in Acts 14:16 that "...in the generations gone by suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways." (A.S.V.) So Israel had become lost sheep in a peculiar sense; they had strayed from their shepherd and their sins brought ignorance, misery, and diseases upon them, so that many of them were truly in a pitiable state when Jesus Christ came ministering among them. Jesus therefore said, in Matthew 15:24, "I was not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Though He ministered to a few others, the great part of His personal ministry was to and within the nation of the house of Israel." God sent His Son first to the Nation of Israel.

But John clearly sees God's larger purpose, and early in his gospel he gives us John 3:16, "God so loved the world..." Not just Israel. We who have known some of the Word of God, The Ten Commandments, and have gone to Sunday School are, in a secondary sense, lost sheep. And many of us, now Christians and followers of Christ, realize that he first sought us. As a shepherd has to find and bring back a lost sheep so the Lord takes the initiative and He first calls us before we seek Him. Thus it is written, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts..." Hebrews 3:7, 8, and 3:15. In John 10:27, 28, we read "My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

So Jesus Christ, since He lives forever, and changes not, is still seeking and finding His sheep and making them part of the one flock -- His Church. Lost sheep are spoken of in Luke 15:4, 6, and this is applied to sinners who repent in verses 7, 10. Then in the parable of 24, "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

JESUS SOUGHT US AND FOUND US  
AND BOUGHT US AND GOD OUR FATHER HAS  
RECEIVED US. Praise the Lord.

#### To Reveal God

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." John 1:18. John also tells us in I John 4:12a, "No man hath beheld God at any time..." And Paul describes God the Father in these words in I Tim. 6:16, "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen, nor can see."

But Paul in Romans 1:19 and through the rest of that chapter shows that God is revealed in some measure by his creation, and all the things that are made and can be seen and observed by men. Paul told the Athenians in Acts 17 (especially verse 26-28) that God had created men and spread them abroad as nations in the earth. "...That they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him..." So men can know that God exists but they can only know a little of Him in His complete character, and mostly as a Creator and Sustainer of all things.

So it was necessary that God reveal himself more directly to men. So he chose Abraham; appeared to him several times and gave him great promises. Then he dwelt with his literal descendants, the nation of Israel, and began to reveal himself and his will to them through their prophets.

In the nation the covenant of the law and the whole

sacrificial system came first; but in the later prophets, God revealed His love, forgiveness, and mercy in a much more complete way.

Last of all, he sent his only begotten Son into the world to reveal himself more fully than through all the prophets which had come before. Jesus came therefore to "declare" and to "reveal" God, and especially in his character as a FATHER -- one who would have a family of sons and daughters.

Jesus revealed God so completely that he told Philip in John 14:9, "...he that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Then he explained that God was in him and did the works through him. Jesus revealed God mainly through two avenues: (1) his works and (2) his words (his teaching).

His works were mainly healing and deliverance, even to the opening of the eyes of one born blind and raising the dead. Multiplying the loaves and fishes might be regarded as CREATIVE. And his words were truth -- "Never spake a man like this man."

Jesus explained and revealed God's righteousness, but far beyond that, His grace, mercy, forgiveness, and love. Also, the promises He gave to those who repented and believed were greater than has ever been heard in the history of the world. We could say that these are summed up in the promise that the pure in heart shall see God, and that an innumerable group shall inherit eternal life and be with the Lord forever. Through Jesus Christ, death has been overcome and brought to nothing. His own bodily resurrection from the dead and His ascension to heaven (with His promise to come back) is the proof of all His works and words.

Then, let us praise God that Jesus Christ came and revealed Him to us. We do not have to grope and feel after God any more. We can know Him, love Him, do His will, and serve Him.

#### To Bear Witness to the Truth

"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." John 18:37. This world is characterized by falsehood and lies. Men's consciences approve the truth, even though very few practice it. The prevalence of lying can be seen in that men are required to swear in legal matters.

In Psalm 58:3 we read, "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." David addressed men in general in Psalm 4:2, "O ye sons of men...how long will ye love vanity, and seek after falsehood?" (A.S.V.) God's attitude toward wickedness..."thou wilt destroy them that speak lies."

Nobody had to doubt a single word from Jesus Christ; all His works and actions were absolutely in line with the truth "...neither was any deceit in His mouth." Isaiah 53:9b. (A.S.V.) John tells us that the One who became flesh was "full of grace and TRUTH," 1:4. And that "grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." 1:17. John deals in great basic concepts and qualities like life, light, truth, and grace but he always links them with the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, Jesus told Thomas, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." This is one of the most profound and revealing statements ever made.

In John 12:49 and 50, Jesus made plain that He did not speak from Himself, but that all His words were given Him from the Father.

The truth that Jesus bore witness to was truth from and about God. He brought further revelation of God's mercy, love, grace, forgiveness, and judgments. He taught how men could live by faith, trusting God and having rest and peace in a troubled world. He dealt with man's major problems in the Sermon on the Mount; outlined the course of this age in Matthew 13 and 24, and showed God's purpose in calling out a people for Himself -- a

special people. But He also revealed eternal judgment and Gehenna, or hell. He spoke of a resurrection for all men -- good and bad; there will be reward and punishment.

Jesus Christ bore witness to eternal truth, not abstract truth, such as men might speculate about. All He said, taught, and did was in the light of eternity. Truth for the Christian is centered in a Person; the main channel for us now is God's Word written in our Bibles and the true understanding comes only by the Holy Spirit. "Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Matthew 24:35.

Praise God that truth has come into the world. THE truth.

#### To Give Life (Real Life) to Men

"I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." John 10:10. In the above article we saw that Jesus claimed to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Reading on in John 10, beyond the verse quoted, we hear Jesus claim to be the one true Shepherd of the sheep. "Sheep" is a term applied to his followers, those who hear his voice and are saved. Peter had confessed Jesus as teaching the way to God in John 6:68, 69 -- "Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God."

Jesus' words and message are part of the means of bringing divine life to men. So the Gospel was ordained of God to be the life-giving message; it was to be preached by the Lord Jesus and the apostles to all nations for the response of repentance and faith. It is the power of God unto salvation to everyone believing.

The whole sacrificial system of the Law of Moses -- ordained of God -- pointed forward to a perfect and final sacrifice, and Isaiah 53 prophesies of this in connection with a suffering Servant. So in John 10:15-18, Jesus

predicts his sacrifice as laying down his life for the sheep. Caiaphas, the high priest, also prophesied of this in John 11:50-52, and it is extended beyond the Jewish nation. This sacrifice is the foundation for free forgiveness of sins, man's reconciliation back to God, and the giving of divine life.

"The wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23a, so man could not receive life till he was forgiven. Christ bore our sins and died, taking the penalty. Now God can righteously forgive and restore us. He does this when we repent, believe, and come to Christ in faith. But it took the resurrection of Christ from the dead to complete the Gospel and show the reality of his sacrifice, and that he is indeed the Son of God, the Savior and the Messiah. Thus Romans 10:9 shows that true faith always acknowledges him as risen and as Lord. Throughout the book of Acts we see the apostles always giving Christ's resurrection the prominent place in their preaching.

But LIFE is more than forgiveness and being reconciled to God. "He that hath the Son hath the LIFE: he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." 1 John 5:12 A.S.V.

So in the apostles' preaching in Acts, we have the promise of the Holy Spirit in addition to forgiveness of sins. The only way that we can have the Son of God now is to have the Holy Spirit, for Jesus rose bodily from the dead, stayed on earth 40 days, and then ascended bodily to heaven and God's right hand where he is now.

So life is imparted to us and sustained in us by God's Word (the Gospel) energized by the Holy Spirit. "If Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness." Romans 8:10.

Divine life parallels natural life in that Christians begin as babies and have to grow and mature. But after repenting and believing on our Lord Jesus, we do know that we receive a new life. God's Spirit is now within us and

witnesses that we are children of God.

Jesus uses the term "eternal life" often. It begins even now but it is entered fully as an inheritance in the next age. See Luke 18:30 and Romans 6:22.

Sinners are under the sentence of death but, praise God, the Son of God came to bring LIFE, and to give it abundantly.

#### To Save Sinners

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." I Tim. 1:15. We have already considered Jesus' coming to seek and to save that which was lost. Saving sinners is the culmination and completion. We have seen that He calls sinners to repentance. Now, how much is involved in "saving?"

1). Forgiveness from God and reconciliation back to Him. All have sinned and are coming short of the glory of God. "Therefore, through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things..." Acts 13:38, 39

2). Deliverance from the blinding power, deceit, and authority of Satan. Paul told Agrippa that he was sent "to open their eyes (Jews and Gentiles) that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God..." Acts 26:18. He speaks of the "god of this world (Satan) blinding the minds of the unbelieving." (II Cor. 4:4). John tells us that the "whole world lieth in the evil one." I John 5:19 (A.S.V.) This seems to imply being under his power, authority, and influence. Matt. 4:3-10 and Luke 4:2-12. He influences men to covet, hate, and strive for things; collectively, he leads the nations into war.

3). Deliverance from the power and bondage of sin. Matt. 1:21 and Rom. 6:14 are basic promises including this. Romans 5:9, 10 show salvation to be much more than

justification (including pardon) and reconciliation -- we shall be saved "by His LIFE." Hebrews 7:25 speaks of being "saved to the uttermost, i.e., completely" because he lives and makes intercession for his people.

4). Deliverance from death. Deliverance from sin and Satan's power means also deliverance from death, which is the "wages" of sin. Romans 6:23. Christ went through death and rose and lived again. He has the keys of death and Hades. He will raise us also, who have died (fallen asleep) and give us immortality and new bodies.

Christ Jesus, sent by the Father, came into this world to deliver sinners from the darkness, ignorance, guilt, slavery, and final consequence -- death, of sin, and to make them saints and worshippers. He is still doing this today, for he lives forever. Praise the Lord!

#### Because God Sent Him

"For I am come forth and am come from God, for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me." John 8:42b. This verse is not so well known, but the truth of it is tremendously important. We could have explained this reason very early in the series, and it perhaps ranks first. Since Christ told his disciples that he was the way, the truth, and the life, and also claimed existence before Abraham, and said that he was one with God, there must be evidence for these claims. He also said he was the resurrection and the life. Without evidence, these claims would make him the greatest imposter and egotist that ever appeared in the world. Following are the reasons why these claims are true:

1). His wonderful works. He told both the Jews (his enemies) and the disciples that they could believe in him for his work's sake even if they could not believe him directly. He healed all manner of diseases and life-long afflictions, even to giving sight to one born blind.



The lame, deaf, dumb, paralyzed, demon-possessed - completely healed and delivered. He raised or brought back from the dead three persons. He attributed all these works to the Father Who dwelt in him.

2). He was the one prophesied in the Law and the Prophets. He was 'the seed of the woman' spoken of in Genesis 3:15; the prophet that Moses predicted would come, like himself, Deut. 18:15; the child born, the Son given, of Isaiah 9:6 (with all these wonderful names and descriptions following): the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 whose soul would be an offering for sin, bearing the iniquities of his people; and the One who would die and rise again to endless life -- whose soul was not left unto Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption, Psalm 16. Dozens of other prophecies were fulfilled literally and exactly in Jesus' birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection.

3). His own words and teachings. "Never man spoke like this man" said some servants who had been sent to apprehend Jesus. His followers have always believed implicitly that Jesus spoke words from God and all his words were truth. His enemies were struck with the graciousness and depth of his words and teaching. He had the boldness to say that his words would never pass away, yet he himself never wrote and printed anything as far as we know. But his words are still with us in the Bible and are still being preserved in all languages according to his predictions. Part of his words was predictions of his own suffering, death, and resurrection from the dead that came to pass just as he said. He also predicted the coming of the Holy Spirit, which came on the waiting disciples, and which is also coming on and into all today who repent of their sins and call on the name of the Lord in faith.

4). The Christian faith. The Christian faith has spread into all nations of the world, although the Gospel yet has to be taken to some smaller tribes and countries. This proves that God sent his Son to be the Savior and Messiah or

Christ for there is no natural explanation for the worldwide spread of a faith, which has been hated by the world and intensely persecuted. Jesus used none of the promotion methods of worldly leaders or rulers. But he predicted that the kingdom of heaven was like a mustard seed which when planted would grow into something like a tree -- a tremendous increase from such a tiny beginning. This has happened already and is still taking place -- the Gospel is good news of God's kingdom and how to enter it; the Christian faith bring us into a heavenly kingdom and this kingdom is now world-wide with subjects in practically every nation and tribe.

The secret then of Jesus' life, ministry, and success is that he did not come of himself, but God sent him. All his acts, words, and everything about him were from God and were energized by God. He was anointed by the Holy Spirit at his baptism, and a visible sign given; a voice from heaven approved him then -- and later on the mount of transfiguration. Finally God raised him from the dead and received him up into heaven at his own right hand.

The Christian faith is therefore in One who came directly from the God and Creator of all things, and One who has been received back to God's right hand but who is coming again as he said. God, in Christ, has promised eternal life to all who trust and obey him. Praise God for the certainty that Jesus Christ is indeed the only Sent One, the Savior of the world!

To Bring Light -- Illumination and Understanding to Men's Souls

"I am come a light into the world that whosoever believeth on me may not abide in the darkness." John 12:46 (A.S.V.)

John tells us very early in his gospel that Christ was the light of men. Also "the light shineth in the darkness..."

Morally, the world is characterized by darkness, that is, they don't know where they are going, like men in literal darkness. Ask the average man who does not follow Jesus Christ (ask as many educated as you like) where he is going and what is his purpose in life and see if he is not in darkness as to these things.

Sin is the basic reason why men walk in darkness. Sin is basically forgetfulness of and turning away from God. God has always given more light and understanding to men when they sought after him and welcomed his revelation, but he consigns to darkness those who turn away from him. "All have sinned and are coming short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23 (literally). Therefore, men must face their sins and seek or welcome forgiveness and cleansing from them. Otherwise, how shall they escape from their darkness? In John 3:19-21, we get very plain teaching on men's attitudes concerning light and darkness, and this comes out in their attitudes toward Jesus Christ and the Gospel -- "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light lest his works should be reproved. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light that his works be made manifest that they have been wrought in God." (A.S.V.)

"And this is the message which we have heard from him and announce unto you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all." I John 1:5 A.S.V. "...The darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth." I John 2:8. We who have come to know Jesus Christ and follow him have indeed experienced light in our souls and light for our pathway. We are promised forgiveness, cleansing, and eternal life by One who cannot lie, and we do know where we are going.

One reason for darkness is hated, as manifested in such things as strife, debating, divorce, war, etc. "He

that loveth his brother abideth in the light and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes." I John 2:10, 11 A.S.V. If we have believed on Jesus Christ from our hearts, and have received God's spirit, we have the love of God in our hearts and we can be free from hate and even its lesser manifestations such as hurt feeling, jealousy, envy, grudges, etc. Therefore we carry the good news that God loved us, sent his Son, and that hate can be replaced by his love and peace. Hate always brings unrest and a lack of security.

In I Cor. 1:18-21, Paul quotes from the Old Testament and concludes that all the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God, for they do not know him. This is the same darkness that John speaks of, though Paul does not use the term "darkness" and "light." Paul said that it pleased God to save men from their folly and lack of wisdom (their sins) by the foolishness of the preached message concerning Jesus Christ. The word "preaching" in verse 21 refers to the message preached, i.e., the Gospel. Paul goes on to show that the same Christ, who was crucified, now is God's wisdom (this includes light) and God's power to us who are called -- who have heard his voice and believed.

Praise God for LIGHT in a world of darkness. Praise him that the true light is already shining! Now we gladly invite others to the light--Jesus Christ IS the LIGHT of MEN.

#### To Serve Men

"...The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister (serve) and to give his life a ransom for many." Matt. 20:28 A.S.V.

Jesus Christ had a ministry of doing along with

his teaching. He was no armchair professor. When Luke wrote the book of Acts, which chronologically follows the Gospel of Luke, he continued to tell of what "Jesus began to do and to teach." Acts 1:1b. Matt. 4 tells of wholesale healings and deliverances for the people just before that memorable account of his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. So Jesus Christ always was ministering to and serving the people and their needs: he mainly healed from sickness, disease, and the various oppressions of the devil and demons, but he even fed the multitudes on two occasions and he turned water into wine at the wedding feast; that was a sign but it was also an act of ministry to people.

Sin brings men into conditions of great need. Israel's need was very great when Jesus was on earth, for they had departed from God and his law and had gone their own way like most sheep. Likewise in our day among people who have the Bible and access to churches, there is sin and disobedience and great needs! Romans chapter one goes into detail to show that condition men get into when they turn from even the revelation of God in creation. If they persistently shut out God from their mind and heart, God delivers them up to a reprobate, or disapproved mind to do things which are neither fitting nor seemly -- even to perversions. Sickness and various oppressions of the devil follow men in their evil lives, but Jesus Christ came ministering to the sinful, disobedient, sick, and ailing with great compassion and mercy. We Christians are called to like ministry -- to at least relieve men's miseries and help them in time of need.

Jesus' disciples were too slow to apprehend this important aspect of his teaching and doing; James and John had ambitions to sit on his right hand in his kingdom, and at another time they asked if they should call down fire on a village of the Samaritans. As late as Luke 22:24 we read this: "And there arose also a dispute among them as to

which one of them was regarded to be greatest." This was at the same time of the last Passover and it would appear that Jesus' action in John 13 in washing the disciple's feet (I am sure they were dirty) was directed at the attitude revealed in Luke 22:24. The basic teaching of that action was, if the master served the needs of the disciples, they also ought to minister to one another. He gave them an example that they could never forget. Only one time later is washing of feet mentioned and this is in I Tim. 5:10 in relation to the widows who are to receive support from the church. All of the things mentioned are good works and works of ministry.

Christian service is therefore to be first to the saints -- fellow believers. The world will not listen to our testimony if they do not see our practical love to one another. Jesus said that is the way they will know that we are his disciples. After the saint's needs are met, then we are to serve others, "created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath foreordained that we should walk in them." Eph. 2:10

Let us then never fall into the trap of being mostly concerned with the exact orthodoxy of our beliefs, as some Protestant churches have become, and then fail in practical ministry or service. Both are important. Believing and trusting, in the Bible sense, are acting. Otherwise, the faith is dead.

But action does start with believing as Jesus showed in John 6:28, 29. We cannot work our way into God's favor. Rom. 10:10 shows the same, "With the heart man believeth (not worketh) unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

"Therefore, having the foundation laid of repentance from dead works, and faith toward God through Jesus Christ" (in dependence on the redemption which he provided) we Christians begin to serve one another. From then on, having acceptance and peace with God through

faith, we can produce living works and can let the love of God have steady and practical development in us. All is the power and energy of the Holy Spirit -- "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Jesus Christ was manifestly the servant of Jehovah, or almighty God; we are his servants as well as his disciples. Happy is the Christian who is serving and laying up treasure in heaven!

#### To Save Men's Lives, Not to Destroy Them

"For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them..." Luke 9:56. The occasion of this saying: James and John had asked the Lord if they should command fire to come down and destroy a group of Samaritans. But the Lord rebuked them, for he had come on a mission of salvation and deliverance, not of judgment or vengeance!

In John 3:17 we read, "For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him." (A.S.V.) In Luke 4:18, 19 the Lord read in Isaiah a prophecy of himself (Is. 61:1, 2) but he quit before he read the last statement... "And the day of vengeance of our God." This is significant, for his ministry was to be one of healing, compassion, mercy, and salvation from sin and its consequent miseries and condemnation; only later, in the day of the Lord, would he judge the world and again make war with his enemies. We have prophecies of him judging and destroying his enemies after the Gospel age is over, in the book of Revelation.

Christ did show his authority a few times while on earth, as when he drove the people and animals out of the temple because of their greediness and moneymaking, but he never actually hurt anyone or injured anyone. And it seems certain he did not use a whip on the people in the temple, but rather on the animals; there were enough

people there to injure or kill him if they had not had bad consciences. That is probably why they slink out before his indignation, not that he used sheer brute force on them! One significant prophecy of Christ quoted in Matthew goes this way, "He shall not strive nor cry aloud, neither shall anyone hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles hope." Matt. 12:19-21 This shows our Lord's gentleness and that he did not at all use the normal force and authority of a leader or man of war. He showed something more powerful and effective -- moral authority and unction of the Spirit of God. Only such can change men's hearts and lives. Men can be destroyed by force, but they cannot be basically changed.

We, the disciples and followers of Christ, are to walk in love. We must depend upon our heavenly Father to vindicate and protect us and to back us up. The whole teaching of Christ for us and that of the Apostles is to the end that we live continually by faith in God and not take matters into our own hands as men of the world always do. That explains why certain commandments are given to us as "I say unto you, that ye resist not evil." He will undertake abundantly for our protection and vindication. Therefore, we are never to have any part in injuring or destroying their lives, either directly or indirectly, as in war. Rather, we are to love our enemies, and seek their salvation.

Praise God for the meekness, gentleness, and love, which our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, showed in his life on earth. And God fully vindicated all that he said and did by raising him from the dead and receiving him up at his very own right hand, and giving him a name above every name.

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time..." I

Pet. 5:6. God will eventually exalt and give rulership to everyone who has believed on and obeyed his Son. ~~But~~ By doing nothing but good and faithfully following the example of our Lord Jesus, we shall be saving men's lives -- not only their physical lives, but their souls. We will be gathering "fruit" unto eternal life.

#### To Preach the Gospel to the Poor and to Proclaim Release or Deliverance to the Captives

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to preach deliverance to the captive." Luke 4:18

A careful reader of the Bible would eventually realize that God often "evens" things up even in this time. That is, he brings down the high and mighty and lifts up the poor and humble; he humbles the proud and exalts the meek. Mary's song in Luke 1 is an example -- I quote part of it: "He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent away empty." Luke 1:51b-53. Job 12:13-25 is a striking passage showing at some length how God works in this world.

So Christ was anointed to preach the gospel to the poor. They are especially mentioned because they are needy and know it. Most of them are crowded out at the bottom in an unloving, pleasure-and-money mad society. And they always respond to the Gospel in far greater numbers than the rich and powerful. Most of the multitudes that followed Jesus were poor. The leaders of the Jews and rulers eventually persecuted and killed him.

The Gospel, then, is specially designed for the poor and it is much easier for them to enter the kingdom. But the rich are not excluded, either. Only they must humble themselves and use their means for God and his kingdom.

Zaccheus and Joseph of Arimathea are two rich men who responded to Jesus.

Jesus was sent to proclaim release to captives. This would appear to be in a strictly spiritual way. However, through the mercy and kindness, which are promoted by the Gospel and by Christians who are the salt of the earth, some might be literally released from prisons.

But the main release men need is from captivity to sin, material things, and attitudes that follow sin. Men are captive to lusts or unlawful desires, such as feasting, drunkenness, immorality, heaping up riches, power over other men, and even shedding blood.

They are also captives to fear, anxiety about the future, jealousies, envies, and other bad thoughts, attitudes, and practices. Peter speaks of being delivered from the corruption that is in the world through lust. Whenever men repent and believe the Gospel, they experience release and deliverance. First God gives them an inner sense or witness of his forgiveness of past sins, and then they experience a release from their captivity to the power of sin and its consequences. And as there is obedience and faith, their freedom increases and they experience the freedom Jesus promised in John 8:32 and 36.

Spiritual freedom is a fact for Christians in any outward sphere or location, even if they were slaves. But outward freedom is also a by-product of the Gospel, and the unusual freedom in America came because of Christianity and God's favor to Christians and those among whom they lived.

Happy are those who have heard, understood, obeyed, and experienced Christ's good news to the poor and his proclamation of deliverance and release to captives; they are a blessed and free people!

#### To Destroy the Works of the Devil

"The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that he might destroy the works of the devil." I John 3:8b

John tells us that he who commits or practices sin is of the devil, in the first part of the verse quoted above. In I John 5:19, he says that the whole world lies in the evil one, or under his power.

In Revelation 20:3, 8 we are told that the devil deceives the nations and the final deceiving will be to gather them to war against the saints and Christ.

Christ's own temptation was in three ways: 1) food, 2) power and influence, and 3) tempting God. There are perhaps better ways of breaking down or describing or analyzing his temptation, but certainly the above three are involved. Number 3 also involves acting independently of God and not trusting him, as did Adam and Eve. I simply included this as "tempting God." The devil tempts men in similar ways today and throughout the age, deceiving men. God has so set up the universe and this world so that men can indeed get more momentary pleasure or thrills out of their independent and sinful actions. Moses, by faith, turned away from "the pleasures of sin for a season." Hebrews 11:25b Also, men get temporary advantage and power by taking their own way. Thus the devil has these desires to deceive men and to work on men, by men, and through them.

The works of the devil, then, are causing men to sin and to doubt and not believe God. Paul also told us that he blinds the minds of those who don't believe and obey the gospel. The devil deceives men and nations by promising them knowledge and pleasure apart from God. He deceives men through their lusts or wrong desires -- "corruption (that) is in the world through lust" -- a phrase from II Peter 1:4b

The apostles told men that Jesus "went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil." Acts 10:38 So men are oppressed with disease,

unhappiness, frustration, fightings, strivings, and miseries untold, for the devil deceives them, leads them to sin and away from God. Only in God's kingdom are there righteousness, peace, and joy!

Jesus Christ healed, forgave sins, rebuked fear, and taught good news. He indeed overcame evil with good. He died but rose triumphant again and overcame our worst enemy, death. And now he lives for evermore to destroy the works of the devil, even in this age -- for and in his people -- finally to condemn the devil to everlasting fire in eternity.

Jesus Christ is our LIVING DELIVERER. Though the devil has not been chained yet, he tells us to be of good cheer, for he himself first overcame the world and the temptations of the devil. He condemned sin in the flesh, Rom. 8:3, by his perfect life, his ministry and promises, and by his death and resurrection. Paul therefore tells us that we are no longer debtors to live after the flesh, Rom. 8:12, nor do we have to "give place unto the devil." Eph. 4:27

Praise God for the coming into the world as "the stronger man" even our Lord Jesus Christ who overcame the devil and spoiled his house. Matt. 12:29 -- is a parable with Satan as "the strong man" and Jesus Christ as the one stronger. Amen.

#### For Judgment

"And Jesus said, "For judgment came I into the world, that they that see may not see; and that they that see may become blind." John 9:39 A.S.V.

In reason 11, I made this comment, "But the Lord rebuked them for he had come on a mission of salvation and deliverance and not of judgment or vengeance." That comment and this judgment of John 9:39 might seem to be contradictory on first appearance. However, they are not, for this judgment is something temporary and judicial -- not

necessarily permanent, as will be the results of the final judgment.

John 3:18, 19 help to give light on the quotation above: "He that believeth on him is not judged; he that believeth not has been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil." (A.S.V.) Then John tells us at the end of chapter 3 that the wrath of God abides (or remains) on the one who does not believe on and obey the Son. Judgment hangs over the head of every man who has heard the gospel and continues unrepentant and in his sins; however, the actual judgment before the great white throne is on up ahead and has not taken place yet. But it is so sure that the Scriptures speak of him as already having been judged. God has made it very clear that his Son Jesus Christ is indeed the only way and the only remedy for sin, so that no man has the faintest hope of escaping judgment if he does not repent and obey.

The way in which men see now, who formerly did not see, is that they are given spiritual insight -- they can now see the kingdom of God. Those who are not born from above cannot see it, as Jesus told Nicodemus, as seeing the kingdom of God first involves seeing and understanding who Jesus Christ is -- that he is indeed God's Son, the Lamb of God who made one perfect sacrifice for sins, The One and Only Savior, and the Messiah, or God's anointed One. The key to this seeing is the Holy Spirit whom God gives to those who obey him, for "the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." Rom. 14:17. In Luke 24:45 we read, "Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the Scriptures." (A.S.V.) This is also "seeing."

Now, John 9:40, 41 reveals the way in which men become "blind" spiritually, for that is what Jesus

was speaking of. He never brought physical blindness to anyone, but rather, gave physical sight to many blind people. Those of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things, and said unto him, "Are we also blind?" Jesus said unto them, "If you were blind, ye would have no sin." But now ye say, "We see: therefore your sin remaineth." We need careful thought here for we might get confused. These Pharisees were, for the most part, blind spiritually, but not blind in the sense that they were without guilt or sin. The light of the world was in the midst of them and they were opposing him instead of coming unto him. So Jesus is plain about their guilt and sin; later he told the disciples that the Holy Spirit would convict men of sin because they believed not on him.

From Matt. 13:11, 13 we can establish the fact of the "blindness" of the Pharisees, and also of those who heard from or about Jesus and still did not repent or come to him -- "...unto you (the disciples) it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given...therefore speak I to them in parables; because seeing, they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand." Mark 4:11, 12 and Luke 8:10 tell us the same thing. Therefore men become blind spiritually when they hear the Gospel of salvation and do not believe on him. They are under what learned men call a judicial sentence of blindness.

Blessed, then, are those who have truly come to Jesus Christ and believed on him -- the Light of the world. They see! They see a kingdom of God -- John 3:3. They see Christ by faith and they see at a distance an eternal city which God has prepared for them. They see and understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God, which are hidden from sinners and the worldly-wise. But those who won't become as little children and be converted, Matt. 18:3, even after hearing the Gospel, will become "blind", for Satan, the god of this world, is busy blinding the minds

of them who believe not, as Paul tells us in I Cor. 2:7, 8 and especially in II Cor. 4:3, 4.

Reader, leave your spiritual blindness (if such be true in your case) and come to Jesus Christ, the Light of the world. You will be happy and glad in his light. Amen.

#### Not to Bring Peace but to Bring Division

"Think ye that I am come to give peace in the earth, I tell you nay; but rather divisions..." Luke 12:51 A.S.V.

In Matt. 10:34 the same truth is taught, the word "sword" being used in a figurative way. Reading the context in both passages, we are told that even families will be divided because of Christ.

Now Jesus Christ is indeed the Prince of peace -- "of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end." Is. 9:7 But he did not come the first time to inaugurate outward peace in a world of sin and rebellion. Rather he came to provide pardon and deliverance from sin for individuals; they would find rest for their souls and peace with God and man. But only few would enter the narrow gate and walk the straightened or "tribulated" way; thus, there would be division. This division is easily seen in the account of the early church in Acts. Though thousands believed on and followed Christ, many more did not and opposed the Christians, even to persecuting them.

The religious world in the West, quotes the words of the angel in Luke 2:14 in an unbelieving and wistful sort of way, at Christmas time -- "Peace on earth, good will toward men" -- yet they go on in warfare and strife. Actually the original says "peace on earth in (or among) men of good will" and this fits with our text.

There cannot be peace with sin and rebellion, but

praise God, there is peace in the kingdom of God, and that right now. The Kingdom of God is... "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." Romans 14:17

It is as simple as this: believe on Jesus Christ and obey him and you will experience God's blessed peace. Neglect or disobey Jesus Christ and you will not have peace. We who follow Christ enter the kingdom and become a kingdom and a holy nation for him right now.

So there will be division in the world through all this age till Jesus Christ returns. But he left us has peace and it far surpasses any peace the world can give. All it can give is an armistice, a temporary peace and that only outward.

Let us bid good-bye to the world system, and enter God's kingdom through genuine faith in Jesus Christ; we will have his peace and be peacemakers -- sons of God!

#### To Manifest and Bring God's Love and to be a Propitiation for our Sins

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins." I John 4:10 A.S.V.

God's greatest moral characteristic is love -- God is love. But men could never comprehend that love unless revealed on the earth. So Jesus fully demonstrated that love by His life of serving and compassion. And by suffering for our sins, and taking them away, He sealed up and completed the love of God.

#### To Give Us Understanding to Know the True God

"And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding in order that we might know him that is true..." I John 5:20a N.A.S.V.

This is similar to 4 -- the declaration or revelation



of God (John 1:18) is to the end of knowing God. Jesus prayed in John 17 "this is eternal life, that they might know thee, the only true God..." The Jews had apparently been cured of outward idolatry after the Babylonian captivity, but fully knowing God could only come through the presence and teaching of His Son.

#### To Abolish Death and to Bring Life and Immortality to Light

"Now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." II Tim. 1:10 N.A.S.V.

"Abolish" is "annul" in Greek; death is still in the world, but Christ's resurrection proves that its power is broken. Believers no longer need to fear death, or let that fear rule their lives. In the past all men, more or less, had their lives governed by the fear of death. The resurrection is the pledge of eternal life and immortality, and the gospel, centering in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, brings that message.

#### Summary

My reader friend, if this summary is kept, you will have a fairly complete study of the basic reasons why our blessed Lord Jesus Christ came into this world. I urge you to file this away.

1. To Fulfill the Law and the Prophets. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. Matthew 5:17

2. To Call Sinners to Repentance. "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Matthew 9:13; Luke

5:32; Mark 2:17 are parallels quotes.

3. To Seek and to Save the Lost. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10

4. To Reveal God. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." John 1:18

5. To Give Life (Real Life) to Men. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John 10:10

6. To Witness to the Truth. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." John 18:37

7. To Save Sinners. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners..." I Timothy 1:15

8. Because God Sent Him. "...For I came forth, and am come from God; for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me." John 8:42b

9. To Bring Light -- Illumination and Understanding - - to Men's Souls. "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me may not abide in the darkness." John 12:46 A.S.V.

10. To Serve or Minister to Men and Their Needs. "...The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister (serve) and to give his life a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28

11. To Save Men's Lives, not to Destroy Them. "For the

Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them..." Luke 9:56

12. To Preach the Gospel to the Poor. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to preach deliverance to the captives" Luke 4:18

13. To Destroy the Works of the Devil. "The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that he might destroy the works of the devil." I John 3:8 N.A.S.V.

14. For Judgment -- Not Final, But a Present Judgment in Respect to Understanding. "And Jesus said, For judgment I came into this world, that they that see not may see; and that they that see may become blind." John 9:39 A.S.V.

15. Not to Bring Universal Peace but to Bring Division. "Think ye that I am come to give peace in the earth? I tell you nay; but rather division..." Luke 12:51 A.S.V.

16. To Manifest and Bring God's Love and to be a Propitiation for Our Sins. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins." I John 4:10 A.S.V.

17. To give us Understanding to Know the True God. "And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding in order that we might know Him that is true..." I John 5:20a N.A.S.V.

18. To Abolish Death and to bring Life and Immortality to Light. "...Now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." II Timothy 1:10 N.A.S.V.

I attempted to rank the above reasons in order, giving the most important one first. This is difficult and there might well be a better order. The reason I gave the Scripture in Matthew 5:17 first is that our Christian faith is indissolubly and inseparably linked with the Old Testament Scriptures, beginning with the creation of all things by God. Therefore, Jesus Christ made it very plain that he did not come to set up a completely different and brand new religion; He came rather as the fulfillment of all the prophecies pointing to him from the Jewish Scriptures, as the antitype or end of all the Jewish sacrifices appointed through Moses, as the one and only Savior, and the One true prophet and revealer of God.

Christ came as the servant of God, but for man's sake, for man was made in God's image. He revealed God and reconciled repentant and believing men back to God. He appointed the preaching and teaching of the gospel and the work of the apostles to last throughout this age until he comes back. Praise God for his unspeakable gift, his only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ! Our trust and hope are completely and eternally in God through the mediatorship of his Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Why We Have To Often Leave the Established  
(Denominational-type) Churches and Assemblies**

1. Because they have settled down in the world, and even love it. (See 1 John 2:15, 16) When Discipleship to Christ and separation from the world was good (200 to perhaps 250 years after Christ), they never settled down; they bore reproach and were persecuted.

2. Because obedience and discipleship are not kept at the forefront; God is leading us onward constantly toward better obedience and maturity.

3. Because big buildings and big religious plants or structures absorb so much money, time and labor that there's little left for the Lord's real work.

4. Because in big congregations most get no real fellowship and support, and no "hands-on" "disciple-ing". These can be had in home churches and small groups.

5. Because love is seldom the main goal (it may be there); other programs and agendas displace it.

6. Because clergy (most often young and even 'novices') displace the functioning of the body in very large measure. And most attending are "meeting-oriented" whereas we should be "life-oriented."

7. Because idolatry is not avoided; national flag display, and their sons going for war training and war show this. We can't put the Kingdom (spiritual) first, and serve another master! (Matt. 6:33)

8. There is usually an absence of the Gospel of the Kingdom and a keen kingdom-consciousness. (Matt. 6:33) Happily, in America, the Deity and Lordship of Jesus Christ are still held and preached, but "Lord, Lord..." without obedience is everywhere. Other things could be mentioned, but I think I covered the "high points." It could also be mentioned that few are Spirit-filled and led, though many claim to be.

And God is not granting these big churches His

blessing and power. We want His blessing *first*, as we trust and obey; perhaps, on up ahead, He could trust some of us with a measure of power.

Coming out was encouraged by early "brethren" in England, and has occurred, of course, down thru the centuries; it should be to Christ, as Lord and Master, and with a love for Him and the brotherhood. Experience shows that coming out for all or mostly negative reasons is not healthy, nor toward unity; it fosters further disunity.

Many of us have come out of 'Christendom' to Christ and the Kingdom of God. But we all need help. The Beatitudes and Sermon on the Mount will be restored among us; they are basic and foundational. Only in poverty and meekness, with a hunger and thirst for righteousness can we mature, bear fruit, and please our Lord. Salvation is very comprehensive--good marriages, a genuine and growing knowledge of God, righteousness, peace, and joy in the midst of toil, trouble, and even persecution, love controlling, and abounding in our daily lives, and God's sure protection and blessing over and among us (including ministry of angels).

Who can accuse or blame us if these are our goals and desires?

We pray for the men and ministries of Ephesians 4, and we keep the prayer of our Lord Jesus in John 17 in mind, especially in regard to our unity; it will come.

**"Be Not Like Your Fathers"**  
**(Fathers Often Broadens to Forefathers)**

The background for the above admonition and warning is that generation after generation of Israelites hardened their hearts and rebelled against God, even though they had been delivered from slavery in Egypt and had God's laws given them through Moses! They were given periods of renewal to obedience and blessing mainly in Judah and Jerusalem, but then they would again turn away from God.

A key passage, perhaps, is Isaiah 43:27 "Your first father sinned; your spokesman rebelled against me..." Their continual turning away from God and their stubbornness is anticipated in Leviticus 26, and the plagues and terrible consequences are frightful, but in verses 40-45 a way of repentance and return is provided and God's mercy and remembrance of His covenant with Abraham and the patriarchs invites them back, and promises their final preservation.

Ezra acknowledged, upon the return from Babylonian captivity that God had not punished Israel as much as they deserved (Ezra 9:13) and Nehemiah made a long confession of their sin and rebellion in chapter 9. In verses 33-35 Nehemiah confesses God's faithfulness in punishing them, and leads them in making a covenant to repent, obey, and come back to His law and His separation of them from the idolatrous nations around them.

But, except for a small remnant among them, they continued a course of departure from God and His Law, and that was demonstrated when they turned Jesus Christ over to be crucified, and were led to say "His blood be upon us, and our children!" So God brought a heathen king and his armies to destroy Jerusalem and scatter the Jews to the ends of the earth; they have suffered as no other nation has suffered, especially under Hitler!

Now, is there a parallel in all this for Christians?

Do we also have fathers and ancestors who sinned and rebelled against God? What should we repudiate? Look up the following passages as a background for your thinking; Numbers 32:13, 14 is an early mention of sinning and unbelief by forefathers, but most passages are later--from 1 and 2 Kings, Chronicles, the Psalms, and the Prophets; 2 Kings 17:13,14; 2 Chronicles 30:78; Ezra 5:12,9;7; Nehemiah 9:10,34; Nehemiah 13:18; Psalms 78:8; Psalms 57; Psalms 106:6; Jeremiah 7:22-26, Jeremiah 16:19; 34:14; 44:9; Lamentations 5:7; Ezekiel 2:3; 20:4, 30; Daniel 9:16; Zechariah 1:4-6; 8:14.

If we are led to link ourselves with outward Christendom, there are abundance of parallels with the history of Israel and the Jews:

1. The graven images that invaded Roman Catholicism and the icons of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

2. The ignoring and forgetting of the Scriptures. Roman Catholics actually suppressed or burned Scriptures (after printing); a worse practice than the Jewish leaders.

3. The introduction of female worship and adulation--calling Mary the Mother of God! Not much of this has trickled down into Protestantism, but pictures of Christ with long hair also tend toward effeminacy.

4. Leaving love of God and neighbor and participating in wars and violence. Asa was afflicted with added wars when he forsook faith in God (2 Chronicles 16:9b).

5. The ill-conceived and fated "Crusades"--the constant tendency to forsake faith in God, and trust the "arm of the flesh"--forsaking of the Gospel, and the attempt to promote the Gospel and righteousness by force and war!

6. Men abandoning their leadership and responsibilities; "women and children" rule when men's delinquency gets real bad.

7. Covetousness, and love of material things take

over. See Jeremiah 6:13 and 8:10

8. Canceling God's Law and Word by men's traditions. An example, The Talmud, under the Jews, and the Apocrypha, under Romanism. Also, building big cathedrals and expensive church buildings.

9. Creating a "caste" system—clergy-laity division of professional leaders and religionists who prey on and take advantage of the ignorant and poor. The Jews ended up with Pharisee and scribes when Jesus came; Christendom had its popes, priests, and clergy--most of whom have been "hirelings." We can have true shepherds and elders, who serve out of love, and "for free", but we must pray for them.

Here is a parallel--just as the Jews were apparently cured of outward idolatry by the Babylonian Captivity, so Protestantism delivered men from the worst abuses of Romanism. And, as the book of the Law came back to more of its proper place in 2 Chronicles 34, so with the Reformation and printing in the Western world; with an open, accessible Bible, a recovery began!

But, many of us have been stirred up and energized to go beyond Protestantism, and obey the doctrine (teaching) of Christ, and move onward toward maturity and unity. So, "Be not like your fathers" is pertinent for us in these latter days. However, many of our fathers, under the Gospel, were obedient, and tremendously dedicated, such as Wycliffe, Tyndale, Wesleys, Spurgeon, Carey, Judson, Hudson Taylor, Muller, John Ryle, and Moody. A bit further back, the Anabaptists should be mentioned--many were martyred, and even burned at the stake for evangelizing and obeying Christ!

However, some things that weaken were still retained or tolerated by some of the men mentioned:

1. Infant baptism--a very evil tradition

2. Clergy-laity division--Spurgeon, Ryle and Moody did not deliver their followers from this, though

righteous men.

3. The Wesley's and perhaps Hudson Taylor allowed effeminacy to come in; it is a major weakening force in the United States.

4. Pictures of Christ have persisted (with long hair).

5. War has been allowed, but reluctantly (Moody and Spurgeon might fit here--also Ryle). The Anabaptists consistently abstained from war, as far back as the late 1400s and through the 1500s--an example for later Christians!

6. Success in business, and 'saving' money--also taking interest on money loaned. All this is really perilous, for the Lord blessed the poor and warned against riches! "Love of money" is so seductive, and often hidden and unconscious, that it begins little and grows and becomes "idolatry" Colossians 3:5 "Be not like your fathers in this!" From the Industrial Revolution, and onward (Spurgeon, and Ryle) this temptation for more money has accelerated, and has been tolerated more!

7. Extreme individualism has developed in Protestantism; I, me, my, mine predominates in our hymnals and songbooks, and the 400 plus denominations expose this tendency. The truth of One Body, one flock, one "holy nation" and one faith is known, but much is undermined in practice. We must go beyond this individualism and not be "like our fathers!"

8. Divorce has multiplied, especially since 1960. Much of that traces to women's immodest and scanty dress--immorality always follows. Men are the source and most to be blamed; they should morally protect their households. Here again, "Be not like your fathers;" don't buy, or tolerate scanty dress for your women and girls; also teach Proverbs 1-9 to your sons! If you're faithful in this, divorce is not likely to come into your household.

9. In the U.S. ~~for~~ the 70s onward work has been avoided by even the moderately affluent, but especially the

young. This is evil. All need to work! Public schools and universities lead away from work; they glamorize sports and all kinds of vanities! God works, Christ worked, (and got tired) here on earth and no man can have dignity and rest of soul, without productive work! The G.N.P. of this nation is declining; economic disaster will follow!

Other things could be mentioned, but finally (in this writing) few if any of our "Protestant" fathers, or others have preached the Kingdom of God in completeness and power! We can have that restored to us; Jesus Himself, the Apostles, and Paul all preached the kingdom of God, and kept it at the forefront (of course with forgiveness of sins and salvation). In our time the present kingdom is touched lightly but not vigorously and consciously and demanding an undivided allegiance!

We can summarize by saying, we must 'go on' with God, for the path of the righteous keeps getting brighter by the grace of God (Proverbs 4:18). Luther "broke new ground," the Wesleys went further, in many ways, the "brethren" in England made many further gains, and God has granted more gains, both here in the West, and in China. But traditions and lack of obedient and Spirit-filled leaders still hold us back!

"Be not like your fathers." Be like Christ!

September 2004

### Those "Blessed" by God Matthew 5:3-11

Here is where Jesus started teaching--we must start here, too. How would we know what pleases God, without these pronouncements?

Do the Ten Commandments adequately let us know what God wants and what pleases Him? Those who stay largely with Reformed (Puritan) teaching often treat the Decalogue as a more or less complete condensation of God's holiness and His will for His people. Some still ignorantly say that it's the Christian's rule of life and practice!

Well, pay attention-- the Ten Commandments are 80% negative--"Thou shalt not..." Jesus' teaching in what are called "Beatitudes" is positive, and is based on faith and love, and lead to this in increased measure and to living in the Kingdom of God!

The entire Sermon on the Mount is positive in character (though it has some "do not's" and warnings) and gives us a "Kingdom program" as we might call it:

1. Be 'salt' and 'light' in the world!
2. Walk in God's righteousness--first inward, but always outward, also.
3. Go beyond the law, walk in humility, faith and love.
4. Stay in your marriages--almost all divorces end in adultery.
5. Live as children of God; ask, seek, and knock--God is your Father.
6. Lay up treasures in Heaven.
7. Use your sight carefully and lawfully--don't indulge in watching evil!
8. Work on yourself, not judging others.
9. Live by faith in God--avoid anxiety.
10. Enter the Kingdom through the narrow gate, and walk the "tribulated" way.

11. Seek God's Kingdom and righteousness ahead of all else.

12. Become obedient to all of Christ's Words, so your 'house' can be secure on the Rock!

Now, going back to the Beatitudes--the 9 "Blesseds." Here are described the people who please God; a people of the Kingdom. Number 1 and number 7 say the Kingdom belongs to such ones! What a contrast to the Decalogue; which is manifestly aimed at man's depravity and sin! The Ten Commandments can't be more than a 'floor;' we keep them, but our rule of faith and practice is Christ's teaching. "The least of these commandments" in Matt. 5:19 have to be Christ's, not Moses', for the ceremonial commands which are not moral, are done away--nailed to the cross. True, the moral commands of the law remain--"the righteousness of the law;" for even Paul says that we "establish law" by faith. All moral laws of the Old Testament are linked to the two great commandments--love God and love your neighbor; Christ's teaching is, too.

Luke 16:16 is crucial to good understanding "the law and the prophets were until John..." Jesus here implies the incomplete and temporal character of the Old Covenant--the Law; and even the prophets didn't bring completion--knowledge of God and righteousness.

Luke 16:16--"Since that time the Kingdom of God is preached, and every man presses into it." The preaching of the Kingdom of God is the Gospel, and brings completion for this age! Only through the Gospel is the righteousness of God revealed--from faith unto faith. Rom. 1:17

"For the Law made nothing perfect, but there is the bringing in of a better hope, by which we draw near unto God." Hebrews 7:19

One of the Ten Commandments has a definite promise connected to it--every Beatitude has a promise connected to it. Isn't that contrast?

The number one Blessed is, essentially, a sense of complete need in the spiritual realm--destitution, in the sense that only God is good, and every good and perfect gift must come from Him. And this is a maintained sense of need, not just a beginning sense; it is the foundation for seeking God and His Kingdom and of all prayer. It is a gateway to all blessing.

The number two Blessed is to mourners--in contrast to the mirth-seekers, those who laugh and joke, the merry-makers, and the light-hearted, and those who love fiestas, drunken feasts, and revelry! Mourners are sober-minded; they see all the sin, misery and sorrow around them, and the forgetfulness of God. Even in the Old Testament we read, "Sorrow is better than laughter..." Jesus Himself was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"--no levity and lightness was ever manifested in His life on earth!

The number three Blessed is "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." The meek are humble, and yielding--those not demanding or fighting for 'their rights.' Most men on earth are ambitious to 'climb,' to excel, or dominate others; meek people are the opposite; they yield "rights" and serve others; if God promotes them, they stay humble, and serve all the more. They never "throw their weight around!"

Underneath all meekness is faith in God, and a "broken and contrite spirit." If there were no reward for meekness, who could maintain it in a "dog-eat-dog" world? But we need to see that the reward is future, not present. Many American commentators are not clear at all in this; they try to apply it now--at least, in part. A-millennialists are quite in darkness here; they don't see Christ's ruling and reigning on earth in the next age, so they can't apprehend "inherit the earth." But one of the large promises of Christ to His people is in Rev. 2:26, 27--to those who keep His works unto the end (probably refers to the end of his life). He will give power to rule over the nations--that's when the

meek will "inherit the earth." But we have to suffer before reigning--for many, right up to martyrdom, or the end of their life! We can afford to be meek now, for we have this tremendous promise of Christ!

The number four Blessed is to those who hunger and thirst for righteousness--want it, continuously. Righteousness is scarce in all the earth--it is the first characteristic (or principle) of the Kingdom of God--Romans 14:17. It is revealed in the Gospel (Rom. 1:17) and produced by the Gospel. It is God's righteousness, and comes by faith, not by Law! God is described all through the early Scriptures as Holy, but also Righteous. In the Old Testament, Daniel is perhaps one of the best examples of this trait of wanting righteousness.

The number five Blessed is for merciful people; they do not judge others, but help them. They leave judgment and vengeance with God. There was almost no trace of mercy in the German and Russian armies of World War II--they were worse than the cruel despots and conquerors of the past. Christians need mercy in Gospel work, so as not to "think down" or "talk down" to the miserable, ignorant, and deprived people. Merciful people will get mercy from God, in the judgment, and some mercy, even here on the earth now.

The number six Blessed is for people "pure in heart." How important--to be pure and undefiled inwardly! For men, this means to be free from lust for beautiful women--or just other women than one's wife. For, in America now, lust and pornography are "on the offensive"; not so 70 to 80 years ago. A man needs much grace to remain "unspotted" from this impurity. Even large numbers of professing Christians think this is impossible. Why? Because they haven't kept their eyes and their sight single; nobody can watch seductive, lust-inciting movies or TV near-nudity, or feed on pornography and have purity of heart. Nor can read salacious magazines, or feed on "soap-

operas" and have purity of heart. We are to deny ourselves all of these polluted things, whether of sight or sound!

One pure in heart is free from idolatry--love of money is the great idol of American men, and is seldom exposed or dealt with. Also, hypocrisy is from an impure heart; the Lord can uncover and purge out of our hearts any remnants of hypocrisy, even when it is not apparent or manifest. One pure in heart must eventually put away all attempts to serve two masters--God and country, or God and mammon! The Gospel provides for forgiveness and reconciliation with God, but more for purity in "the inward parts"--a pure heart and a renewed mind. Only with these can a holy and good life follow. Only with a pure heart can anyone be like Christ and fulfill the two great commandments.

The number seven Blessed--Peacemakers should be translated peace doers, or those practicing peace, for it has acquired a very limited meaning in modern English. The umpire/mediator/go-between idea is too dominant in the usual understanding of "peacemaker." But the compound Greek word is tremendously broader and larger--it's one doing peace at all times. We know that we have peace with God, through faith, if we have repented and called on the name of the Lord. From peace with God, and a heart free from hate and strife we can then learn to practice peace with God, and a heart free from hate and strife we can then learn to practice peace increasingly in all of life. Quite often, through defective teaching and immaturity, young Christians stay "feisty" quite a while and learn peace slowly. So this excellent (and rare) quality of life-- "practicing peace" needs to be preached and taught in all its "breadth" and completeness. It especially needs to be joined with Heb. 12:14: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Seeing the Lord--or God--was the promise to the pure in heart in Matt. 5:6---fulfilled in resurrection, and after we put on



immortality. Follow peace when war comes? Yes, we can't declare a "moratorium" at any time in our obedience to Christ! God may have tolerated some fighting and war participation through this age in the past, when many didn't have Bibles, and had poor teaching, but it is not excusable now. Here in America we have lots of the descendants of the "Anabaptists" of the 16th century; the faithful of the Hutterites, Mennonites, and Amish have stayed out of war for 5 centuries--so have many Quakers, and lots of "Brethren" up till World War II. War is nothing less than a disgrace for Christians, for Christ commanded us, "resist not evil" and "love your enemies." "Resist not evil" is a "bottom-line" obedience for a peace-doer! Of course, faith is the only way we can obey and continue in practicing peace; God is our Father, and the source of our protection! We can leave all consequence with God, as we refuse strife, fighting back, and resisting evil. He will "back us up" if we obey! We can also function as mediators in some degree in society, in marriage reconciliation, stopping fights, etc., but we must first live in peace with our families, relatives, neighbors, and stay out of war.

We shall be called sons of God, then not just children! Even leaders who allow war participation to Christians are no more than children-if that; they are not God-anointed shepherds for God's people!

The number eight Blessed is comfort for the persecuted "all who will live godly." The world has always been hostile in heart toward the righteous, for they are sinners and unrighteous. As they hated Christ, the only perfect man to walk on earth, and crucified Him, led by the Jews, so the world still hates Christ, and His righteous people. Jesus sort of summed this up in his prayer for us in John 17:9-11, and especially verse 14. American Christians are not very aware of the world's hatred; soon, the Lord will make it real to us again. John 15:18-24 also describes the attitude and actions of the world toward the righteous,

and that fits perfectly with this Beatitude.

The number nine Blessed is much like number eight, but goes beyond it and is greater! It breaks down "persecuted" into a few categories, including all kinds of slander. But the "core" factor is that it is for Jesus Christ's sake, because we obey Him only! "For righteousness' sake" is good and commendable, but on a lower plane than for the name of our Savior and Redeemer. The world hated Him--the Light of the World and it will hate us also--we are now "the light of the world," till the Lord Jesus returns. Jesus Christ is already "the Prince of Peace." I forgot to mention that under number six.

So, the Beatitudes are basic and primary, in the "Doctrine of Christ"--much more basic than usual Protestant teaching. They have majored in doctrines, (its always singular in Scripture) but have been very disobedient in many ways and have largely abandoned the "Gospel of the Kingdom."

God will establish these basic things again, and make our path brighter at the end of the age--may we make known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places "God's manifold wisdom." Eph. 3:10 I think that involves our obedience, and God's order down here, among us! Amen

### The Role of Teaching--Its Importance

In 2002, in America, teaching--comprehensive teaching, from the Scriptures is universally neglected--sometimes despised. This is serious, for teaching is the main vehicle to impart knowledge and wisdom. Experience also teaches, but who wants to learn everything "the hard way?"

The book of Proverbs is a wisdom book--it is for Christians, the people of the New Covenant, the people of the Kingdom of God. We do not have a book just like it in the New Testament. Listen to a few passages from Proverbs; "Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching" 1:8; "My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart" 3:1; "Listen, my son, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching" 4:1, 2; "My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching" 6:20; "My son, keep my words and store up my commands within you. Keep my commands and you will live; guard my teachings as the apple of your eye" 7:1, 2; "Instruct a wise man, and he will be wise still; teach a righteous man, and he will add to his learning" 9:9. Then back in Proverbs 5, we find the admission of an older one, whose life has been ruined and wasted, "I would not obey my teachers" 5:13, (All quotations are from the N.I.V.)

Twice, a mother's teaching is mentioned, but the focus is on the father's instruction and teaching. How tragic that most of us got more teaching from our mothers, but very elementary, and mostly when we were quite young. There will be very little wisdom and discretion in any peoples whose fathers have abandoned their teaching and leadership role. But God will come in, in grace, and teach some of what their fathers did not!

Proverbs anticipates what is everywhere around us today--protection for the young men from immorality and seductive or "wild women." Most of chapter 5, the last half of chapter 6, and almost all of chapter 7 afford teaching and protection--especially for young men. No college or university provides this; a few might have a very little, where Scripture is read, but it is almost altogether lacking. Behold this; a few might have a very little, where Scripture is read, but it is almost altogether lacking. Behold the so-called wisdom of the world's education! So, a large percentage of our men will fall into immorality and adultery with the weakening and debilitating results, and the bad conscience before God, and the fears that sin and rebellion bring!

Christian men, part of your leadership role--given you from God, is to teach and warn your children; don't you want them to be wise and use their abilities in constructive and efficient ways--for God's glory? Hardly any men are seeing and accepting this responsibility! The last part of the Great Commission is "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Jesus' words and commands have been grievously neglected, even in Protestantism, with its open Bible! Yet His teaching is foundational, authoritative, and final for this age. Teaching takes time and some concentration, both for the teacher and the one taught; it was easier in former times. With cars, TV, radio, and the hundreds of options of things to do, most people choose almost everything else than time for teaching. In one Beatitude Jesus taught "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." This is crucial for those taught--much of righteousness also needs to be taught. Jesus taught God's righteousness, and implied that His own was greater than, and exceeded that of the religious leaders--this is till true today. Many churches today, including those wanting to be called holiness churches, and Pentecostal and charismatic

ones neglect teaching by having so many activities in their meetings that very little time or room is left for it. Great weakness results; good teaching strengthens and protects against deceivers, who abound. John calls young men strong when the word of God remains in them--they have been taught! (1 John 2:14) Timothy was well taught by his mother and became strong in the Lord, though weak in his body.

Christians, teach your children systematically right in your own homes; simple reading of the Word--one or several chapters a day is good to begin with. The father should do this--it is part of his leadership and headship. In most of the churches there will not be enough good teaching; this can be supplied right in the home. If your children are to be wise (and why shouldn't you and they end up as wise people?) and not shallow or "scatter brained" then early reading of God's Word will start them on the path to wisdom. Though very rare today, real wisdom is really readily available! But don't send your children to the dangerous public schools; there they will learn vanity and immorality! Many home-schoolers have already reaped the good fruits of their extra labor and responsibility before God!

Let's desire and treasure good teaching in our fellowships--teachers are third in the church. Let's not think we can just "worship," "love the Lord," and "be led by the Spirit." Apart from good teaching all such concepts and strengths will break down. God's Word tells us how to walk righteously, how to be led by the Spirit, and how to mature in love. We primarily obey Christ Himself, His words, and the Gospel; the Holy Spirit energizes this in us, and implements our righteousness and obedience. "Ye obeyed from the heart that form of teaching unto which you were committed, and having been set free, ye became servants (slaves) of righteousness." Romans 6:17-18. Paul thanks God for this reality in the Roman Christians--

--the "form of teaching" went along with Matthew 28:20, centered in Jesus' commands.

Yes, teaching will need supplementation by all other ministries, and by the lesser gifts; may God supply to us--His very needy people--both the men and all the ministries we need, for our perfecting and maturing. We will pray toward that end.

### A Christian Country? The Character of All Gentile Countries.

The large "civilized" countries of the West--especially Germany, Great Britain and the United States have been tremendously strengthened and enlightened by Jesus Christ (the Light of the World) and the Gospel. Some of the good things have been exported to other countries and areas of the world. In the past Sweden and Holland have shown the power of the Gospel, and the good effect of Christianity on nations; some African nations have also shown this. Great Britain and the U.S., particularly have financed and printed literally millions of Bibles and New Testaments, including many other languages; they together furnished a large part of the Protestant (and non-denominational) missionaries for the world from the late 1700s through the 1800s, and then, especially since 1900, those that did effective Gospel work in Latin America.

But, even at the height of their power and influence, they all turned more and more to guns, and weapons, and "learned war" increasingly (as nations); Germany, more learned and "educated" seemed to turn away and degenerate faster, till the demonic monster, Hitler, took over. But only an apostate nation could be taken over--where the "salt" had lost its taste, and the "light" had almost gone out! Jesus made it plain in His teaching, that we are only the salt of the earth and the light of the world; we are not primarily reformers, or those applying "band-aids"; neither are we a conquering army, as quite a few songs and hymns suggest! We ought to be wise, and observe and remember how the Church and Christians have been treated in Russia, China, Germany, and even in the U.K. and America. Peacemakers are not loved in the largest countries of the world; war-makers are esteemed in all of them! In the U.K. and America, there has been better respect and treatment of Christians and the Gospel, and that

tends to "lull" toward "sleep" many professed Christians; the world, to them, does not lie in the power of the Wicked One--Satan! But the Scriptures say that it does! (1 John 5:19)

Jesus clearly taught that the world would hate both Him and His followers, especially in John 15 and 16, and when He prayed that great intercessory prayer in John 17, He said, "I pray not for the world, but for those You have given me (real Christians)!" In that prayer He also acknowledged the hatred of the world. Under persecution and reproach, this has been realized; also that this entire period before Christ returns is "AN EVIL AGE." Germany, since the rise of Hitler, proved that this is both "an evil age" and that the world system repudiates real Christianity--the small minority who live by faith, do good, and stay separate from the violent, fear-ridden world system!

But in Britain and America, there have always been a large number of people, trying to identify the Kingdom of God with their nation! Real Christians, who confess Christ, and obey Him, compose the Kingdom of God, and, in a sense, we are a strange "nation" in the midst of the kingdoms and powers of the world. Passages that show this aspect of our faith are Rev. 1:6 and 5:10 (most later translations-- "kingdom" --not "kings") and 1 Peter 2:9-- "a holy nation." And Peter calls us "pilgrims and strangers" as we are, individually. Since Christ was not "of the" world, neither are we, in this age!

So now we have, in America, an influential number of leaders and writers--quite often well-educated and with plenty of money available, who are propagating non-Biblical ideas like:

1. We are a Christian nation; they ignore facts like:
  - a. Many of our early leaders were masons and some, Deists,
  - b. Only 5-7 percent, approximately, were regular

churchgoers,

c. The whole character of the American Revolutionary War was seeking and fighting for "rights," contrary to Christ's teaching!

2. They think, and assert, that our agenda is to try to bring America back to God, and bring back (or establish) the Kingdom of God, by law.

3. These think, in a period of relative quiet and non-invasion by alien armies, that we Americans are better men, and not depraved, like Germany became.

4. They take advantage of general evangelical weakness, and do have some good analyses in their writings, and they sponsor home schooling or Christians control of schooling and education, and other healthy reforms.

But a fatal flaw in all their influence is that they don't acknowledge I John 5:19 and they are blinded as to Satan's kingdom in the world (Jesus "spelled this out" in both direct teaching and parables); they don't point out that all Gentile nations are assiduously "learning war" with Britain and America near the top! They largely ignore that America has produced and sold more weapons of war and destruction than any nation in history (and must "reap" for it), and is a leading abortionist nation! The young people are "going wild."

When such leaders substitute their agenda of reform, along with friendship for the world, instead of Christ's "you are the salt of the earth...you are the light of the world," "We are His (God's) workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works..." then we must see them as dangerous and not our leaders at all. They have infiltrated the home-school movement to a large degree, most of which is Christian. A true "world-view" that is Christian has to view the world as hostile and non-Christian,

including Britain and America--both have degenerated, and probably, beyond recovery.

But, wise Christians don't identify with Gentile nations--we identify with Christ, His teaching, and the Kingdom of God! All renewal will be in the "little flock," the "few," the "holy nation"--not in any of the nations of the world! If God should give temporary renewal in America, we will rejoice, and take advantage of it, but we have no Biblical grounds to expect it.

But we are not a defeatist people, as some of the above men have designated us. No, the despised few (remember the Beatitudes at the last--persecuted for righteousness and the name of Jesus Christ) in the Kingdom of God will overcome the world, even in the severe conditions of the end-time. God's abounding grace guarantees that!

Early "brethren" in England re-captured much of what I have set forth here; they originated "dispensationalism"--a virtually new Biblical orientation. In its initial development (until the false pre-tribulation teaching of a two-stage coming of the Lord started dominating many of them) they really promoted obedience and holiness, and a greater knowledge of Christ. They were free from clericalism, which wasted money on big buildings; they were keen Bible students and teachers, and many went to foreign countries and successfully preached the Gospel, and made disciples. I owe much to them. They early threw off many accretions and traditions that remained in Protestantism; they also offset, in some degree, the effeminacy that has come into evangelicalism and the cultures of Britain and America-- "like a flood."

But the larger part of "assembly" testimony eventually has degenerated into a very dangerous and powerless "easy-believism" ("eternal security and very little repentance stress, or none), actually, much more sectarian than "renewal" in character!

So we must go on--John Robinson gave that principle to the departing pilgrims in Holland-- "God has much more truth to break forth from His Holy Word." Pro. 4:18 shows this principle--our path will get brighter and brighter until our Lord returns. None of the "brethren" seem to have gotten hold of this principle; many lapsed into a negative criticism of almost all of Christendom!

So, apostate "assembly" people and "patriotic Christians" and Reconstructionists will all drag us downwards and impede real renewal--they are being captured, or have been captured by the world. We are to overcome the world, so let's leave them behind. None of these had the full gospel--the Gospel of the Kingdom, which will be very much needed in the end-time. No Protestant or "assembly" agenda will enable us to overcome, and face persecution--the Gospel of the Kingdom will! I have written four papers on the present Kingdom of God; they are free.

Written in southwest Michigan, 2005

#### Today's Tendency toward Nakedness, and the Christian Attitude

There is a strong tendency toward nakedness in this generation, and since the writer believes that all of this goes along with immorality, there is a necessity to speak out about it, for the Christian is commanded to "Flee immorality..." I Cor. 6:18. A strong statement is made to the same effect in I Thess. 4:3, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from immorality." I am not charging, however, that all Christians who wear scanty clothing from time to time are necessarily immoral; most of them aren't. But the wearing of scanty and revealing clothing is a main cause and contributing factor toward immorality, for the world is full of lustful men, and this encourages lust.

After Adam and Eve disobeyed God and sinned, He put clothing on them--skins of animals. Generally, all races and all cultures have recognized this need of clothing, and most have not rebelled against it. If we ask the significance of why animals need no extra clothing, and why mankind does, the answer must be related to sin and lust; men have powerful and active imaginations (toward evil, after the fall), and women will be preyed upon and abused if they are not protected by clothing. Mankind does not have the built-in protection against the abuse and over-use of sex that God has put in all the animal kingdom; thus, without proper clothing and demeanor, man has tremendous potential for immorality and debauchery. Of course, clothing is necessary in all colder climates. All mankind recognizes nakedness and the vast majority frown on it in public; even in India, which is mostly hot, and women are well covered by their saris, and the men do not go naked. Animals, on the contrary, are neither conscious of sin, nor nakedness.

Those of us who are older remember a time when

only the most depraved people showed this tendency toward nakedness; even up into the late 50s most of the women wore dresses below the knees, and most men hesitated to wear no more than shorts in public. But Hollywood and the theater were whittling away at people's resistance to nakedness, and were glamorizing as much near nakedness and exposure (especially in the spring) with new styles of shorts and very scanty clothing, down to bikinis. And jogging has become an excuse to wear shorts for some who would not otherwise wear them.

God has granted me a lot of close and precious fellowship with younger couples and Christians in recent years, and I am addressing them in a special way. I have said little, if anything to most of you on this subject, but I would not be faithful if I didn't warn against this tendency, for many of you have grown up with a tolerance for it which my generation did not have. Many of you young people had, in the past, a more or less steady diet of the theater, and then later, television. Constant exposure to any evil tends to make it less repulsive to us, and we become unaware of the danger to a large extent. My mother taught me this poem:

*Vice is a monster of such fearful mien, that to be hated needs but to be seen;*

*But seen too oft--familiar with her face, we first endure, then pity, and then embrace!*

This came from some English poet--Pope, I think, though my mother never stated whom the author was. But she recognized the truth behind those lines, and I, even more, in today's world.

Is it true that a tendency toward nakedness leads to immorality? Well, I think we would be very naive if we didn't recognize the inescapable link between the two. When did rape go up very sharply? When did divorces

begin to climb? When did pornography begin to be a scourge for our young people (and others)? Was it not in the '60s when women began to wear the scantiest clothing in American history--shorts, scanty two-piece outfits, bikinis, etc.? And most of us men, even Christians, did not take a strong enough stand against all this. God willing, some of us are being moved to be faithful from now on, and it is a good time to start afresh, for we Christians can have a healthy and powerful resistance to this temptation.

For the past few years, women's dresses have been generally acceptable, and much longer than the short dresses and min-skirts of the '60s. But there are many predictions that fashion designers are planning to shorten the skirts again, and some are predicting the return of the min-skirts. This is a good time for both Christian men and women to fortify and strengthen themselves against participating in the seductive and immoral fashions of the world, and to steadfastly refuse to be seduced toward near-nakedness.

Paul was chosen of God to set the standard for Christian women--they should adorn themselves with "modest apparel." The Greek word for "apparel" is "katastole" and means, literally, "long robe" or "long garment"; Young's Concordance gives the first meaning. The prefix "kata" means down in some combinations, and it accentuates the meaning of other words. So, since the thought of length is inherent in the word for "apparel" that should teach us that all short and abbreviated clothing for women is contrary to the will of God and displeasing to Him. In discussing this with men of or near my age down through the years, we have had general agreement about it. Unhappily, many of us have kept too silent, and others didn't rule and protect their own households; they let both their daughters and their wives buy and wear shorts and other scanty clothing.

Now the whole country debates the abortion issue,

and the whole world knows of America's immorality, for it cannot be hidden. For the abortion issue is really the immorality issue; abortions are perhaps not much more than the tip of the iceberg, so to speak. Tragically, the majority of the abortions are for the young, unmarried women; this adulterous generation is ruining and demoralizing its future mothers, and the reaping is already terrible, and will become worse. Dressing modestly is an absolute must, if immorality is to be reduced.

Men, you are the ones who need to take a Christian stand, and protect your wives and daughters; they are more easily deceived, and often do not realize all the implications and results of exposing themselves! There is actually more need of protecting your women from tendencies to nakedness and immorality than from physical danger, though that is much more of a possibility when women dress carelessly. I don't think I need to prove that to many of you; statistics would prove it, even if I couldn't. It is usually your money that buys the women's clothing; see that it doesn't buy any of the scanty or abbreviated kind, lest God chastise you severely, and let some of your wives divorce you. All carelessness in regard to modesty, clothing and demeanor tends to make the home less stable, and tends to multiply problems between husbands and wives. You Christian men need to resist the shortening of women's skirts, which may come this year, but will come for sure sometime in the future; actually it is your own protection, as well as that of your wives and daughters.

You women would do well to remember back to the '60s, and then realized that there is a terrible reaping for the carelessness and immorality, which began to greatly increase in that period; scanty clothing was a major contributing factor. Many of you need to repent, even if you did not know better back at that time. You who are Christians need to be told that the whole tendency to dress like the world wants you to is very foolish, and even

dangerous. This is a major weakness in women, and some of you won't be able to overcome without listening to and obeying your husbands, and accepting the counsel of older Christian women. Women suffer more, physically and emotionally, when immorality increases, though men also suffer. And it is evidently much more difficult to adjust to and have a happy and satisfactory married life, when either or both husband and wife have been promiscuous and immoral before marriage, and when they have conformed to the world and its thinking and practice. Most of you were trained to have a mind that approves and follows the things of the world; now, as Christians who have repented and begun to follow Jesus Christ, let God re-train your mind. "And be ye not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Our Lord taught us that we were the salt of the earth; we aren't good salt if we let the world seduce us into near-nakedness or very scanty clothing. Like salt is different from the food it seasons, and never changes, so we ought to remain different, and keep the standard of modest apparel for the women, purity, and protection for their households for the men.

The command to flee immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18) implies that we have to avoid things leading to it; it's too late if we toy with it, or play around, and disregard the command to flee--get away from it! Pornography, either in reading material, or on television, or the screen will always lead into immorality; so will dancing and wearing scanty clothing--sooner or later.

"...Fornicators and adulterers God will judge." Hebrews 13:4. In all lists of evil and bad sins, sexual sins are prominent, and often head the list. When I was very young these sins were not nearly as prominent nor widespread; people had to work hard in those Depression days to make a living; they didn't have time to "play around." These sins became much more frequent and



prominent when people prospered and could "live high on the hog," so to speak. It is a good time for we who are Christians to deny ourselves, be temperate (a major protection against immorality) and refuse to go along with the world's seductions toward nakedness, its permissiveness, and its exploitation of sex. We are in the kingdom of God; we are a holy people, and there is great reward for purity of heart, purity of life, and overcoming the world.

Praise the Lord, I know of families and many precious sisters in the Lord who are maintaining God's standard and I salute you. Christian men and women, stand fast in purity and faithfulness in your marriages, and you can shine like lights in the darkness; you can be overcomers to whom people will come and find Jesus Christ (and rest and peace in Him) through you.

### Over-Simplification; Ignoring the "Much More"

Christians have to be exhorted to go on (be born, or carried along) to perfection (maturity) as seen in Hebrews 6. Perhaps a large majority are like the Corinthians; not able to receive and digest solid food yet (Cor. 2:1, 2).

There are so many ideas and "clichés" which are all around us hindering growth and progress; I list a few:

1. "Eternal Security". This is perhaps a leading hindrance, as it is popularly taught, "once saved, always saved", "once a son, always a son", "but you can never lose your salvation", etc. Not everyone lives wickedly or carelessly if they have been taught "eternal security", but it does tend that way, and it militates against a leading statement by the Lord Himself. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst for righteousness"!

2. Christ's "finished work." This usually derives from Christ's anticipative (for He had not actually died yet, nor shed His blood) cry "it is finished (completely)" in John 19:30. What is included in this? Only two main accomplishments!

a. All the works and teaching that the Father sent Him to do, during his incarnation.

b. His perfect sacrifice for sins, as the "Lamb of God". Deliverance from sin and the world would come to the people of God through Him as a Risen Deliverer and Savior, as stated in Romans 5: 9, 10. I'll comment on that later.

3. The "work of the cross" is not a Scriptural term! Astonishingly, this has been used much by leaders who have lots of enlightenment and have taught many good things. But they apply it to denying self and overcoming the "self-life", which must come by living and walking in the Spirit- not by the "work of the Cross"! Christ rose from the dead, and we are, by faith, united with Him, and become children of God. We are child-trained by the

Father; grace operates to us, and in us, and the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" enables us to grow, mature, and bear fruit!

4. "At the cross" and "at Calvary" are themes in songs that evangelical Christians sing, but they weaken us, if we forget the resurrection and the grace and strength flowing from a Risen Lord!! The "where" and "when" of our forgiveness was when we repented, and called on the name of our Risen Lord! Faith could not be exercised 2000 years ago, before we even had existence, and we are "justified by faith"!!

5. "Deeper life" or "Higher life" are ideas that often indicate a genuine desire to avoid carnality and mediocrity. But they rarely make obedience to the Gospel and to Christ foundational! Also they rarely stress the Beatitudes, or teach the Sermon on the Mount intensively; many try to develop a "superior" system of teaching from the epistles, especially Paul's. Actually the better obedience we arrive at will lead to "higher" or "deeper" life!

6. "Baptism of, or with the Holy Spirit" is also a cliché. It does not provide all Christians with apostolic power, as most of their leaders have promised. "Tongues" has been given to many, but it is wrong to equate it with the indwelling and sealing with the Holy Spirit; it is a manifestation, but not a "short-cut" to spiritual living.

7. Many dispensationalists, assembly people, and others have called a beginning faith and confession "SALVATION", as though that guaranteed final acceptance by the Lord. This is mischievous, for justification and reconciliation to God are only the beginning of a life under God's training and deliverance. We can't ignore or forget the parable of the Sower and the seed. Continuance (John 8: 31, 32) and fruit bearing are integral parts of our Great Salvation; also overcoming the world. (1John 5: 4, 5)

8. "Rapture" is a coined word; a cliché. It is usually taught, and thought of as an escape from a coming time of

intense tribulation, rather that connected with the Lord's Glorious Second Coming. Plainly, it's a lie, and gives a false hope. It does not recognize the Lord's total program, or purpose; to bring into His Kingdom an innumerable company (Rev. 7), and to bring His people to maturity and the "unity of the faith" (Eph. 4). An "imminent" rapture has been taught since 1830-40 and onward and very widely believed in America. We are appointed to suffering and tribulation; "rest" only comes when Christ returns in glory" (2Thess. 1: 7, 8), and "at the last day"!! (John 6:39, 40 44, 54)

God's truth and the Gospel need no clichés; we need to stay with Scripture, and use the words of Scripture. The tendency all around us, here in America, is to over-simplify, water down, and make salvation easy, without repentance, and to call Jesus Lord and God without learning to obey Him.

I promised to comment on Romans 5:9 and 19. Both verses have "much more" in them, showing conclusively that salvation is more than justification and reconciliation; it is DELIVERANCE; from the world, and also from personal trials and temptations. Matthew 1:21 has that promise-"from their sins".

A concept that I forgot is widely held-"saved by the blood of Christ (or the Crucified One)." This is not Scriptural; we are saved by "His life" and by our Risen Lord Himself! Christ's death and shed blood redeemed "bought" us and procured our pardon, and provides for continual cleansing, but we need His grace throughout life for soundness, wholeness, and conformance to Christ, in character. Also, we need His intercession for us-Peter did! (Heb. 7:25, Luke 22:31)

Young and immature believer's are frequently unaware of the clichés which weaken them and songs with pleasant and "catchy" tunes which also weaken faith and make them forget the things leading to maturity and fruit-

bearing. So we who teach and exhort need to deal with these weakening tendencies and to call saints onward to strength and maturity. We all need God's maintenance of "hungering and thirsting for righteousness" in and among us so that daily and continuously we may move onward unto God's ultimate purpose and program for us. We take food and water every day; Jesus used reality in natural life to teach us the need for growth and progress in our Christian (spiritual) life!

Let us go on....!

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#### **Why did John warn New Covenant Believers against Idols? Are You Free from Them?**

A book, "Who Owns the Children" by Truth Forum (Austin, Texas) came into my hands just recently, raising the main issue of Compulsory Public Education here in the U.S., but also raising many other issues related to our obedience to Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of God. The book revealed the extent of encroachment on our liberties, and the undermining of our obedience to the Lord to a greater extent than 90% of Christians realize. So I write with the objective of warning beloved fellow-members of Christ and God's Kingdom, and strengthening our obedience and loyalty to Him Who has all authority in Heaven and on earth.

Most Christians probably would indignantly protest that they love the Lord and don't have any idols-or idol influence-in their lives. Well, if you truly trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean to your understanding, then you are indeed free from idols. If you don't try to serve both God and mammon, you may indeed be free from idol influence. But, you have to truly be free from covetousness-love of money and things-for covetousness is called idolatry in Col. 3:5. Covetousness is very insidious; if you are taking something for nothing, if you are trying to make "quick money" (more than you can earn by your own labor and sweat), or if you are living partly or totally off interest or "investment funds", you may be guilty of some covetousness without being conscious of it. Another way you could be guilty of some covetousness is if you have failed to help someone in real need (especially a brother or sister in the Lord) when you could or should have done so.

Now, here is an issue some of you will be "touchy" on, but it must eventually be faced, if you confess that Jesus is your Lord and Savior. Do you display or salute the flag of this country? Have you been taught to pledge

allegiance to it and the country for which it stands? How can you pledge allegiance to a Gentile power, which pays no attention to the commands of the Lord to "have faith in God", "love your enemies", "love works no harm to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law", "overcome evil with good", etc.? How can you pledge allegiance to a power that insists on, and pays continually for the learning of war (West Point, Army, Navy, and Air Force installations)? How can you pledge allegiance to a country which now legalizes abortion and the killing of thousands of unborn babies, which forces attendance at public schools where girls learn immorality, where many promising young people learn to use drugs, and where many fail to learn even reading and writing well? Some of you are so naïve that you swallow the theory that this nation was founded on a Biblical basis, and has been Christian most of the time. No, the Pilgrims and Puritans didn't found this nation; they only settled in a small part of it, and had no idea at that time that it would become an independent nation. The revolutionists hardly had any religious people among their leaders (only one clergyman signed the Declaration of Independence), and Tom Paine, who later became an outspoken atheist or agnostic, had a lot to do with supporting revolutionary sentiment. Most of those who led the revolution were strictly secular men (some very well educated and very capable, and inventive, like Thomas Jefferson) who were mainly seeking their rights, and freedom from England's unjust and excessive taxation, but none were men of faith in God as their heavenly Father, and all His commands are to yield our "rights", and not fight back, as unbelievers do!

Remember, that the Constitution makes abundant provision for defense and war, and provides the "right" to won and bear weapons; this is just the opposite of the practice of obedient Christians, and peacemakers. Jesus blessed peacemakers; this country had never blessed

peacemakers; it has endured them, so to speak, better than European countries, but has, in a small measure, persecuted them and reproached them. Probably the presence of large numbers of Mennonites, Amish, Hutterites, and smaller numbers of Quakers, has restrained the hostility of leaders and society against peacemakers, but that will probably fade.

It's just as impossible to serve both God and country, as it is impossible to serve God and mammon. For who has control of mammon? Who has the power to coin and control money and trade? The country, or nation, of course; God has allowed that in this age, and so He tells us to render to "Caesar" what is "Caesar's". But be realistic; any Gentile country has to live and protect itself by war and preparation for war; that is the penalty for their sins and their covetousness. When they put "In God We Trust" on the currency that is hypocrisy, and is not true; probably the influence of the world-bordering and world-loving religious leaders is the source of this pretense. For if they trusted God why would they need to learn war, and carefully provide for the armed defense of the nation? We need to realize anew that what John tells us in 1 John 5:19 is absolutely true, in this age; "We know that we (Christians) are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one" (A.S.V.). Other translations translate something like "...the whole world is under the power..." seeing that as implied in the phrase "lieth in". False leaders have taught in England and Germany that they were Christian nations, too, and German soldiers had "Gott mit uns" on their belt buckles in World War I; they wanted to think God was with them, and their clergymen taught them that He was! But don't think that the U.S. is free from this; I saw almost all of the clergy, and supposed religious leaders do this same thing during World War II.

Here is an important fact that a lot of people ignore, or conveniently forget about; the U.S. has been the largest

exporter and supplier of armaments for war in the history of the world! I heard the U.S. Secretary of State admit that on the radio a few years back! Now, who do you think made all those armaments? And didn't they make them for the money they were paid, thus proving their covetousness? Yes, but we can be sure that thousands have a bad conscience, for it is entirely possible that 1/3 to 1/2 of those working in producing and handling those armaments professed to be Christians. And, right now, in January and February 1991, some of those armaments may kill some of their own young men over in the Persian Gulf area.

Christian, be diligent to come out of all this bloody, hypocritical, and violent business; it belongs to a world controlled by Satan. Satan showed all the glory of the world systems to Jesus when he tempted Him; be very sure that armaments and war lie behind and always accompany this glory and power. We can make a living, and are promised our daily bread without making armaments, or helping to kill our fellow men. Don't think you can reap good and peace, if you sow war or working in armaments, or any other thing that brings harm, immorality, or corruption to your fellow man. God's law of sowing and reaping operates on all levels; individual, societal, and national. We have to sow peace, and be peacemakers-without compromise-if we are to reap peace and quietness.

The protection against idolatry is to trust God unreservedly, with an undivided heart. And now this has to be discipleship and obedience to Jesus Christ, the one Way to God. That means entering the Kingdom of God and living in it, and seeking it first. Once we are fully conscious that the Kingdom of God is positively the only everlasting entity and kingdom that shall ever exist, and that all the others will vanish away and "go down", then we shall be glad to give God and Christ our undivided allegiance; we shall gladly confess that we have no other loyalty. Read again the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter of Daniel where several times it is

revealed that the Son of man and the saints shall possess the kingdom and sovereignty over all the earth-"under the whole heaven"-for ever and ever! Of course the New Testament shows us that this will be after resurrection and the coming of Jesus Christ to reign; we have to trust, suffer, and obey now, so that we can reign then. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.

What can a nation give you that is permanent? Forgiveness of sins, peace, hope, eternal life, immortality, knowledge of God the creator? No, but these things are all given freely to the people of God who are willing to suffer now and follow Christ, the Risen Lord of all. So, patriotism is foolish, as well as idolatrous; it is putting a certain amount of trust in a country under Satan's power, and in men who are dying-most of the leaders probably will die within about 30 years; some in 10 or 20! Jesus Christ is both the Prince of Life, and the Prince of Peace; He is positively the Only One worthy of our loyalty; let's give it to Him and divide no a "jot" or "tittle" with any other man or entity!!

The book I read related the issues and results of many court cases concerning home schooling in many States. Behind many of the decisions was the implication that the State owns the children, or, at least the right to train them to be good citizens of the State. This was implied, as I said, and only stated in a few cases. But what is involved here? Idolatry, nothing less. No State ever gave life, neither can it sustain or guarantee life. Parents, under God, give life and origin to the child, and God charges them with the responsibility to nurture and train those children. When they are Christians, they are to teach the children the Word and will of God; The State will never do this! Children are called a "heritage of the Lord", for He alone causes conception, and gives life and personality to each one of them. To turn children over to the State, then, for their training and education, involves a substantial and

perhaps large measure of idolatry. I have read a lot about Hitler's Germany and the Holocaust; I read the large, well documented "Rise and Fall of the Third Reich" by Wm. Shirer. The results of Hitler's regimentation and control of the children in the "Hitler Youth" movement is a warning to all generations afterward that the State can only lead children toward sin and destruction, and away from God and Christ. Many of these more impressionable youth actually become open idolaters, regarding Hitler as a Savior and Deliverer.

My generation turned their children over to the public school system, so they could be "better educated" and make more money; the schools didn't look too bad yet, and many Christians were teaching in them. But now those of us who are older can see an element of idolatry in this (mostly subconscious, no doubt), even if the schools were quite good, in comparison with today's schools. And, in many of the churches of my time, children in VBS and in various youth groups were allowed, or even taught, to salute the flag. So idolatry was not so far from them as they thought, and the steady decline of piety and real obedient Christianity proves that, to me. God is a jealous God, my dear brothers and sisters; He wants our loyalty and worship, and that of our children; we do not even dare to have any "gods" along side of Him! Loyalty to any nation on earth, either by adults or children, is idolatry, especially to those who know the Gospel and have an open Bible! The book from Truth Forum indicates that this country got quite a bit of their pattern for compulsory public education from the Prussian system in Germany; now we can see that that system was a big factor in developing the tight-knit, nationalistic, pattern behind German pride and militarism, both in World War I and World War II. Hitler very skillfully exploited this self-worship, and very rapidly took the German children into his Hitler Youth movement, even from the religious youth groups. He never could have done

this without great pride in the German People, or without their idolatry!! No, if the German youth had been taught to fear and worship God alone, and their parents would have given them a good pattern to observe and follow, they would never have said "Heil Hitler" and given him their bodies and souls, as he led them into the most senseless murder, slaughter, and sadism that modern times have seen. Public education, and then the colleges and universities all prepared the way for this; practically none of the educators, and very few of the clergy did anything effective to hinder or slow down this Satanic development.

The basic bulwark against idolatry and a one-world mentality is the Christian home, and faithful teaching in the churches on the Kingdom of God, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and therefore the freedom from the fear of man. For in a situation like developed under Hitler, the fear of man keeps even good people from saying too much, and then waiting until it is too late. The great majority are driven on in the course they are going by fear of one another. We don't know how many dissenters that Hitler liquidated; at least, I have not read any book so far that tried to relate that, but we can be sure that is was quite a few. Let's keep the Christian home intact at any cost. What a blessing the home school movement is in the United States, and how we should praise God for it, and support it with all our power. We are already well down the road to socialism and State control, because our unsuspecting forefathers have forsaken faith in God, their responsibility in the training and educating their children, and have yielded to covetousness and the love of money. Also in the matter of insurance, they have forsaken honesty, integrity, and faithfulness in paying for their own losses, and so have forged chains for us who follow-pouring millions of dollars down the "rat-hole" of the false protection of man's insurance! How much better is faith in the Living God, and the refusal to lean on the props of sinful man's protection schemes! Many Christians down

thru the ages have seen the sinfulness of "going down into Egypt" for help; namely, seeking help and support from sinners and those who reject the Gospel, and will not live by faith in God. God often reproved Israel of old when they forsook faith in Him, and went to some heathen king or kingdom for help.

Now, let us look at probably the most dangerous program in this country, which is leading its citizens in slavery-Social Security. This was "sneaked in" by Franklin D. Roosevelt and his political advisors, as only a supplemental help for those working in factories, etc. and off the land; originally it was not suggested that its would become a main source of income for millions, so that the State would appear to be their god and provider! But so it has become, and most of those who rest in its provision, and don't see that God alone is our provider and the One to whom we look for daily bread, are idolaters. Thousands are now on this pernicious program, including a substantial number of young people in their 20's, so that some of those who should and could work, won't do it; the program has been extensively abused, and large number of covetous people have finagled around and are getting the checks and thus creating a terrible burden on the young middle-aged workers. Many self-employed people have given up; how can they pay the 14% or thereabouts when the profits on the businesses may not be much more than that? Why work so hard to support the many lazy "parasites" that this system has encouraged and helped to create? GOVERNMENT WAS NEVER CREATED BY GOD TO FEED THE PEOPLE OR GIVE THEM SECURITY--THAT IDEA IS SATANIC AND IDOLATROUS! The "powers that be" are established by God to restrain and punish evil the evildoer, and for that He has given them police force-the "sword", ~~guns~~, or whatever they need. So, Christian, I advise you to try to stay as far away from government subsidies and control as you can; Satan is behind them all, to try to wean

us away from faith and trust in God. The State, under the guise of providing and giving security, is leading people in exactly the same direction as Communist Russia, Communist China, and Hitler's cruel and destructive Fascist juggernaut! Let us lift our voice and influence against this trend before it becomes fully developed; let us warn the people against their idolatry, and be sure that we don't contribute one little bit to it. I myself am consistent right through at 72 years old. I have never taken one cent of Social Security benefits and never will, by God's grace. I saw clearly, when I was compelled to get my first card, that it would hinder children from honoring or providing for their older parents; that, in itself, showed its anti-God character, for God has ordained that children support their parents, when necessary, not turn that over to the State!

We have gone so far in this direction that it probably is impossible to reverse the trend, so we Christians can only try to avoid contributing to it, and give the world our testimony that God alone is the provider and protector. For any who have been on Social Security for 5 or 6 years, do a little research; you will surely find that you have already taken much more than you put into it, and now you are living off the hard-earned dollars of younger wage-earners, many of whom have substantial families to provide for. You would try to avoid doing that to your own children, but since the source is more or less concealed in the public system, you may be willing to oppress those who don't know about it. Anything that we don't earn, or is not freely given to us as a gift, is probably unlawful for a Christian, for "it is more blessed to give than to receive". Receiving from the State is often, probably most of the time, taking it out of someone's pocket! Indeed, I actually heard one legislator (perhaps a Senator) say "We are a nation with every man's hand in his brother's pocket"!! Are you one of those? Now, some stop farming, and I would not condemn them for that; it is an evil that may well be

*Men have to - (very low profits)*

*in the 80s*

very difficult to avoid. In many cases, they deserve the total income they get, even if it includes subsidies, for they toil long, hard and sacrificially. But many of them would prefer not to take them, (the subsidies), for along with them comes more and more control.

God is allowing "civilization" to wind itself up, so to speak, and become oppressive and cruel, and it will get worse, not better. So, we have the message the world needs, salvation and deliverance through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and participation in the Kingdom of God-the only kingdom and citizenship which will endure for eternity. We have the only message of liberty, "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." The price of world-citizenship is going to be slavery for you, and much more for your children. Being in God's kingdom is coming under His rule, and obeying Him; ultimately, and especially in the end-time, you will either obey God, or you will obey the government, the nation, and therefore, Satan. Civil government, when "salted" with Christian influence, will ~~try~~ try to control and oppress the people; it will stay within its appointed function-restraining and punishing evil and evildoers, and keeping order in society. But the national system, with its inevitable learning war and practicing war, goes way beyond civil government; it seeks glory and power, and is always characterized by pride. Observe that Hitler and Stalin did not represent civil government; they represented naked power, murder, torture, and control over as many men as possible; therefore it ought to be clear that nationalism is Satanic. Arnold Toynbee, the historian who tries to analyze history, and draw important lessons from it, makes clear that he dreads nationalism (he mentioned the anomaly of having Christian and national flags in the church buildings) and sees it as a modern form of idolatry-the worship of COLLECTIVE POWER. That, of course is the State, in its national capacity. He saw that nationalism

in the West is essentially the same as Communism and Fascism under Hitler and Mussolini.

I'll just mention very briefly other dangers that many Christians may not be aware of:

1. Compulsory vaccination. Government has no mandate to do this, and faith in God would forbid it for most of us. Actually, some forms of vaccination carry far more risks than the diseases they are supposed to protect against. The book "Who Owns the Children" documented some of this, though a minor theme in the book. We won't lay down any law for all Christians, but my own faith is that God can and will keep me alive just as long as I should be on the earth-without any vaccination. And I'll probably stay healthier!

2. Compulsory no-fault insurance has only come recently. Doesn't it bear witness to the crookedness and lack of integrity in people generally, and don't they pay heavily for it? But much more than that, it shows the States' eagerness (even if not at the Federal level yet), to demand uniformity over the whole range of auto drivers, and thus get more power for itself? It is certainly a factor in the growing power of the State.

3. War conscription, as of now, is not severe, but the registration system shows that it is concealed there, and will come into force rapidly whenever the leaders and the populace think the nation is in danger. If you allow yourself to be inducted into the armed forces, you are normally required to swear an oath to uphold and support and defend the Constitution, and the theory of military discipline is total obedience to the officers above you. How can you thus give your body and soul to men-sinful men, when Jesus Christ bought and redeemed you from this dark world, and says that you are now His? You are not your own, if a Christian, you are already "under orders"-the teaching of Christ and the apostles, and you can tell those seeking to conscript you this! You are commanded to love all men and



seek peace with all men--the total antithesis to warfare!

Now I have a work for you "fundamentalists" and Baptists, and any other who uphold patriotism; you have lapsed into idolatry, but many of you without realizing it; wake up and realize that no man can serve ~~two~~ masters!! Many of you have been taught an emasculated, easy-believism salvation, which is no salvation at all; without repentance and separation from the world, and without submission to the doctrine of Christ and the apostles, your claim of salvation is empty. Christ is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him (Heb. 5:9); not just those who say they believe on Him! I am sure there are many in your ranks that will obey Christ, and walk in His peace, when they are taught the whole counsel of God.

So, my dear readers, you can see that idolatry is all around us in some form, though graven images are not everywhere. Anything that gets man's loyalty and service is an idol, for man owes that to His Creator and Sustainer, God. Some of what I have written may seem hard, but fear God, and evaluate it from that stance.

John Rieley  
February 1991

### God's Order: Male and Female

1 Cor. 11:1-16 is CRUCIAL teaching for today on America; also for Britain and the U.K. Why? Because of the lack of order in society, the church, and in most homes. Man, as the head (director, controller, and authority) is often absent, either physically, or morally; Warden Hardenbrook's book "Missing From Action" (came out in the 80's, by Thos. Nelson) analyzes this condition through many generations!

Many Gentile Christians, especially in America, form their theology and teaching from Paul's epistles--they like his emphasis on grace, and on justification and forgiveness of sins apart from the works of the law; they like his emphasis on liberty in Christ (though often perverting it!). But few like, and hold to his teaching in! Timothy 2 and 1 Cor. 14:34, 35; by now, most institutional churches, as well as the large majority in the Wesleyan, Pentecostal tradition are very highly effeminized, and women are in prominence!

How many women, especially professing Christians, are cultivating and moving in the direction of a "meek and quiet spirit"? Especially the quiet part? And yet this is one of the highest priorities for a woman of God! See 1 Peter 3:4. Talkativeness and "chattering" should eventually be reprov'd, for "When there are many words ("a multitude of"-KJV) transgression is unavoidable, but he (or she) who restrains his lips is wise." Pro. 10:19

This is not teaching just for meetings; it is for all of life! Do you read in meetings in the first 15 or 16 verses of 1 Cor. 11? It is not there at all! "Coming together" is not mentioned till verse 17! Do you want to be a "sloppy workman" for the Lord?

So, we are really bad off, if the women are teaching men or mixed groups (1 Tim. 2:11-15), and speaking in the church meetings; it's disobedience and has been weakening

American Christians for many generations.

If any ask why Jesus didn't teach directly on this, the answer is that Jew and Jewish Christians usually followed God's order for men and women; Gentiles often were far worse off in their effeminacy, having "goddesses", and queens, in place of kings. The Corinthians were predominantly Gentile, and so, probably, were most of those Timothy was to direct and teach.

Education does not change either men or women, as to their natural inclinations; it often renders women bold and arrogant, in place of meek and quiet!

Paul's teaching is "the commandment of God", (1Cor. 14:37). Woe to those who resist and come against this teaching! Men are mostly to blame here; if they were strong in the Lord, and capably accepting their leadership role and their responsibilities, women wouldn't be so tempted to be leaders or big talkers! Women who are wives, and sometimes mothers of 3-12 children have a full load already; it will take the grace of God to be both a good wife and a good mother. She doesn't need a lot of other activities, like many American women "take on," and usually end up tense, overworked, and not able to really "rest" in the Lord!

Earlier in this article, I might have seemed to exaggerate women's prominence; I thank God that men still predominate in being pastors, in trying to function as elders, in writing the solid, theological books and the more objective ones, but the men's leadership is being threatened, and sometimes undermined, by their wives.

Let's "get back" to God's order; His way is always best. Children and young people here in America are nothing less than victims, when God's order is abandoned; very few are being well-trained, learning to work and study hard, to deny themselves, and to have a purpose in life, and move resolutely toward it! Thank God for raising up the home-school movement-some of the children under good

parental training are preparing for life and its struggles, and are getting to know the Lord early, and to fear the Lord-the very beginning of wisdom (Pro. 1:7).

### What is the True Gospel? Or A Full Gospel?

1. All truth, for man on the earth, has to begin outside of him self, and be objective. Man has inherited from Adam a fallen, corrupted mind and judgment, so he is dependent on God to reveal truth to him. The delightful phrase "the word of the truth of the Gospel" is found in Colossians 1:5 and links with Luke 16:16 "the Gospel of the kingdom of God is being preached, and every man (of all nations and tribes) is pressing into it".

In its broad sense, everything about Jesus Christ, God's Son, is part of the Gospel. (Rom. 1:15) The Roman Christians had already believed the initial Gospel, but Paul was ambitious to preach and teach more of it to them. 1 Cor. 15:1-4 shows the more important (and basic) facts of the Gospel. Luke 16:16 implies the superiority of the Gospel to "the law and the prophets" – they were preparatory and incomplete!

So, the way the Pentecostals appropriated the term "full Gospel" was somewhat misleading – emphasizing manifestations, as tongues, and the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" – and is subjective. They did not preach the Gospel of the kingdom of God objectively, and as foundational to all else, so their life and fruit are deteriorating.

2. Jesus Christ brought the Gospel and the kingdom of God to the Jews first, but prepared for it to go later to all the world (John 19:16; Matt. 28:19-20). He is the theme of the Gospel, for He came from God in Heaven, is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life", and conquered death often dying, by His resurrection. He became man, and "tabernacled" among men. He trained 12 men to be apostles, knowing Him, and God, the Father, and to preach to Gospel of the kingdom of God, and faith to enter and live in the kingdom (a "mystery" kingdom during this age). He came to reveal God, and to save men who repented from their sins. (Matt.

1:21) After His resurrection, He ascended back to God in heaven, but sent the Holy Spirit to empower the apostles to spread the "good news" and to bring men back to harmony with God, and to do good on the earth, instead of evil, being forgiven of their sins.

3. The largest term for the Gospel is the Gospel of the kingdom of God; in its fullness this has been missed, or neglected by Roman Catholics, Protestants, and almost all evangelicals. Some have preached it, but lacked the consciousness of its power and priority. We must recover the conscious preaching and teaching of the kingdom. Other term for the Gospel are "Gospel of God", Gospel of Christ", Gospel of peace", Gospel of the glory of Christ", Gospel of the grace of God", simply "the Gospel", and perhaps a few others. But the largest and greatest is "the Gospel of the Kingdom of God". Jesus predicted the worldwide preaching of this Gospel of the kingdom in Matt. 24:14, and then the end (of the age) would come; this has not been completed yet. The kingdom of God is His rule among and over men, with the gift and power of the Holy Spirit; the Law did not establish this at all! But only a minority believe and obey.

4. The full Gospel establishes real righteousness in men who believe in and follow Christ – not just imputed, but also imparted - "from faith unto faith". (Rom. 1:6, 16-17) Jesus taught that our righteousness had to be better (or, greater) than the outward righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees; the Gospel of the Kingdom brings this to men of faith (with the promise and gift of God's Holy Spirit). We seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness. (Matt. 6:33) Good works (Matt. 5:16) replace selfishness. We start by faith, and live by faith!

5. The full Gospel brings life to men; all they have

is existence, vanity, and darkness when they refuse the Gospel. The true Gospel is life-oriented, not meeting-oriented. Groups like the Church of Christ, Assembly ("brethren") people, and liturgical churches, are too meeting-oriented, and their obedience on daily life is usually poor. The Anabaptists of the 16<sup>th</sup> century were good in their daily obedience. The "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus operates in true Christians who enter and live in God's kingdom; righteousness, peace, and joy are theirs. (Rom. 14:17)

6. Sinful and rebellious men are "without God and without hope in the world". (Eph. 2:12) The full Gospel establishes hope in men; hope of resurrection after death, hope of eternal life, hope of "the glory of God, and the hope of the "restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21), when "the earth shall be filled the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea"! Hope points forward to our destiny, and our inheritance (and that of the earth). The meek shall inherit the earth.

7. The full Gospel center in Jesus Christ, God's Son – not in the Spirit, or gifts – but includes the gift of the Holy Spirit to repentant, believing men, and all the manifestations and gifts of the Spirit – all for the glory of God, and the Lord Jesus. The Gospel has been written down, and the Bible reveals and declares it, as well as the preaching of it – "Scripture cannot be broken". Jesus Christ brought words from God (Spirit and life – John 6:63) and His words will never pass away!!

8. The full Gospel is also the Gospel of the grace of God; to sinful men it is first free forgiveness of sins to those repenting, and then grace (power) to overcome the world. That includes the war, strife, idolatry, vanity, pride, lust, immorality, laziness, and waste that most men fall into.

"All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father (God), but is of the world". (1John 2:16)

9. The full Gospel brings God's love into man's heart, (Rom. 5:5) to replace hate and strife. This takes time to develop, as does all growth in grace and faith; we start as children of God and become "sons and daughters" (2 Cor. 6:18). Love increases.

10. Protestants achieved a printed, open Bible early in the 16<sup>th</sup> century; a source of faith. But they (and present-day evangelicals) seem to start with some separation from the world and evil, but then later fall back under the power of the world and evil. A full Gospel brings the power and perseverance to forsake the world and love it, and to enter and live in the kingdom of God, and obey the teaching of Christ, especially that in Matt. 5,6, and 7 and Luke 6 and 12. This is the "obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:6, 16:26) increasing in the true children of God, though sometimes slowed by poor teaching. "Greater is He that is in you-all (plural), than he who is in the world" wrote John to the saints.

11. The full Gospel does not promise believer's peace (except inward of the heart and conscience) and prosperity in this life, since persecution and tribulations are appointed for us! But that make the Gospel more precious! God gets the glory when His saints suffer and endure; they have "righteousness, peace, and joy" in the Holy Spirit, given to each.

Let us pray that the full Gospel – the Gospel of the kingdom" will be restored everywhere; once again a Gospel of power (Rom. 1:16, 17 and 1 Cor. 4:20) and the good, superlative, news!

Written at White Pigeon, Michigan, Spring of 2005

### Is the Kingdom of God a Present Reality? Why Seek it First?

In the second question, I in no wise wanted to weaken the command in Matt. 6:33; we are to obey it!

I read widely. I also have heard on the radio the better and more gifted communicators. None have a real powerful, clear-cut Kingdom of God message. I just read quite widely in a book by one of the "greatest" men of God since the late 1800's. A couple of times he describes the Kingdom of God as in our hearts. He acknowledges it, but that is only a small, subjective aspect of it! Another great man of God, in the early part of his ministry, treated the Kingdom as up ahead – when the Lord Jesus comes back in glory and reigns. That is not wrong, but it leaves a big gap (for now)!

Many a-millennialists have to treat the Kingdom as present, but I have not met any <sup>one</sup> who have a clear-cut message as to its top priority right now! Maybe there are such?

#### A Top Priority

Jesus said the Kingdom belongs to the poor in spirit and those persecuted for righteousness – 1<sup>st</sup> and eighth! He taught much about entering it and living in it. He said we are to seek it first, in all our pursuits. He first announced it as near, and then said it would come with power. (Mark 9:1) From Acts 8: 12 onward we find Phillip, Paul, and (by implication) all the apostles preaching the Kingdom of God – as present. Most of the Lord Jesus' parables are about the Kingdom – it has Top Priority in His teaching. Paul, in his summary description in Rom. 14-17 would seem to include all he had taught, in that epistle, within the "parameters" of the Kingdom of God!

So, I state boldly that the Kingdom of God message must come to the forefront in these last days – it's the

Faith once delivered to the saints! Jesus said it was to be preached to the whole inhabited world (oikoumene, Greek), and then the end (of this age) would come. I would not be reckless and say it hasn't been preached, like Herbert Armstrong arrogantly claimed (he claimed the renewal of it through his radio message, beginning in the mid or late 1900's). But it has not been boldly and consciously set forth, even by men like Murray, A.B. Simpson, Spurgeon, Moody, Billy Graham, Adrian Rogers, John MacArthur, etc. Why is this?

God works in what many would call slow, mysterious, gradual, and progressive ways, but toward His own goal – to have a special people for Himself – free from all idolatry, a holy people (and nation); a people like Jesus Christ, His Son. These people have their supreme loyalty to Him and His Kingdom, and their number, though small in any time period, will be innumerable; uncountable! Rev. 7! But the manifestation of their obedience and loyalty has been feeble and incomplete. We are to look, therefore, for a revived Kingdom of God's message and a more complete grace to live in it, and manifest its power. (1 Cor. 4:20) How else could our path continue to get brighter? (Pro. 4: 18)

An excellent book on Kingdom living has come out very recently – "The Kingdom That Turned the World Upside Down" by David Bercot. John MacArthur had written one several years before – "Kingdom Living, Here and Now" (Moody Press; easier to find that Bercot's book) Bercot's book is probably the best yet on Kingdom living – stressing Jesus' teaching and obedience better. His emphasis is in line with Paul's significant statement I Rom. 6:17, "You obeyed from the heart that form (pattern) of teaching to which you were committed".

Bercot discusses in detail the rise of a State church from Constantine onward, and the inevitable tension between it (of the world and loving the world)

and the obedient people of God's Kingdom. He has done tremendous research in the writings of leaders and theologians from the days of Tertullian, Justin Martyr, Iraneous, etc. right down to the Reformation and onward – the history of Western Christianity.

His book can be obtained from: Scroll Publishing Co. P.O. Box 4714 Tyler, Tx 75712, or his present address: David Bercot, 22012 Indian Spring Trails, Amberson, PA 17210. Ph. 717-349-7033

A small weakness on page 16 of Bercot's book can easily be corrected. Luke 17: 21 has to read "among you" or in the midst of you" because of the context – "you" is plural, not spoken to any individual at all! Jesus was answering a question of the Pharisees, "When is the Kingdom coming?"

We need to see first the objective reality of the Kingdom; one early manifestation of it was the healing that Jesus accomplished, and the casting out of demons. (Matt. 12:28) The coming of the Kingdom and the preaching of it was fully accredited by God! Its eternal character is shown even back in the Psalms, especially Psalms 145:11-13. Psalm 72 shows the future, ultimate glory of the Kingdom. Luke 1:33 shows the Jewish aspect (where the Kingdom first "took Root" as to speak) but also its eternal character! Zacharias' prophecy in Luke 1:68-79 shows more of the salvation aspect of the Kingdom of God! But the "other sheep" of John 10: 16 will all be "brought in" and inherit the Kingdom after running the race set before all of us. Grace abounds!

Present Kingdom living – joined with obedience, endurance, bearing "fruit", and tribulation (See Rev. 1:9) prepares us to inherit the Kingdom and eternal life; we have the Pledge in the Holy Spirit.

George Ladd wrote a good, compact book on "The Gospel of the Kingdom"; it has limited distribution, but is still published by Eerdmans, 255 Jefferson Ave. S.E.,

Grand Rapids, MI 49520. It deals more with the objective aspect of the Kingdom – coming first in "mystery" form and spiritual character, but merging into the eternal, world-wide Kingdom of Glory! These objective aspects are foundational; we are called into a kingdom that came in history (Luke 16:16) but is a large part of that ultimate Kingdom. Only God can consummate this – "For the knowledge of the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea"! The Kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ. (Rev. 11: 15-18)

"Brethren" (assembly people), searched the Scriptures as perhaps none other before them; but their leaders (having a chance, perhaps, to see and preach the present Kingdom of God) almost totally missed preaching into "meeting orientation", neglecting "life-orientation" and have ended up in "easy-believism" and a false "eternal security" system, which yields no security at all! But early men among them were true Kingdom men – George Muller, Robert Chapman, Anthony N. Groves, Dan Crawford, and others. The introduction of the two-stage Coming of Christ, and pre-tribulational "rapture" replaced the Kingdom teaching "if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" 2 Tim. 2:12; it was false and poisonous! It must be discarded, here in America, where it became strongest!

I think the historic and objective aspect of the Kingdom must be foundational, just like the Gospel must first be seen as coming from heaven before it becomes "the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes". (Rom. 1:16) Moses didn't bring the Gospel; the prophets foretold it, and described many aspects of it. But only Jesus Christ, God's Son could bring it to earth – "in the fullness until" in that verse contrasts the preparation with the actual fulfillment "the Gospel of the Kingdom of God".

All the best teaching and practice of any group or people (including "brethren", Reformed, Baptist, Charismatic, Keswick, or any other) is still incomplete, and

needs to be within the "parameters" of the Gospel of the Kingdom! Nothing else is as big, or as comprehensive!

Bercot's book on Kingdom living is probably the best yet (in English); nothing else is as forthright and powerful, that I know of. "Grace" people could add their emphasis to it.

Let us, Kingdom people, aim for total obedience, and our eternal inheritance, with Christ, God's Only Son. Amen.

P.S. Norman Geisler gave an analysis of the differing prophetic positions taken in the past and present in a book about Ethics in our late time. His elaboration of Isaac Watt's teaching is probably the most complete that can be found.

None of the "systems" of the past developed a bold and clear-cut Kingdom of God message – meeting present needs! The better dispensationalists probably came closest, or prepared the way.

So, with nationalism still dominant in most of the "inhabited earth" with their training for war, a strong present Kingdom message will come forth and grow; persecution will follow. Our Kingdom is not of this world, either in origin or practice. Our King is Prince of peace, and was crucified by the World Rulers of this darkness. God raised His Son from the dead and He has a present Kingdom of "righteousness, and peace, and joy" in a world filled with lawlessness ~~and~~! Luke 16:16 perhaps brings this out more clearly. The "and violence!" (Psalm 2: 1-3) is still true of the nations and their rulers, even where Christianity was planted, and where it is still strong or influential. They prefer their "kingdom" to God's Kingdom!

### Effeminacy in Church and Society

Effeminacy is a throwing off of God's order, seen in Creation and taught definitively in 1 Cor. 11- Man is head of the woman. Only by men's leadership and headship can God's order be restored, and it must begin with His people. But we can't wait for Protestant evangelical leaders, even the best, for they are all affected.

Men are responsible, primarily and first; women who resist a restoration of man's leadership will then be guilty of rebellion against God! But things are so bad now that neither men nor women fully recognize our plight, so who knows where the responsibility lies?

Edwin Cole tried to help men in the U.S., and did in some measure. His and a few other books have appeared and some are helpful. But most lacked in exposing how pervasive this malady and sin is, and how its underlying cause is lawlessness – the largest definition of sin (beyond transgression). Warden Hardenbrook came out with a courageous book, published by Thos. Nelson – "Missing From Action"; but was not republished after just a few years by them. It probably got a lot of "flak" as we say. But the book was probably the best that has appeared in the English language in at least two ways:

1. Its analysis is most complete for America; he traces some of it to an over-emphasis on "equality" in the Declaration of Independence - equality in functioning, as well as in dignity and sharing in God's image and likeness! The he traces developments in our history.

2. In chapter 11 of the original book, he shows a principle, drawn both from Creation, and much more definitively from God sending His own Son for redemption and salvation that: man is to initiate love, as God has done! What a concept, especially for American men! Most of them have always been taught that women are the most loving; many encourage women to take leadership. That is

disastrous; God never endorses such!

I will try to briefly go way back in history to show that men have always had temptations toward effeminacy, from Adam onward – he may have “stood by” when Eve was tempted; for he did not protect her.

1. From the days of Nimrod (a grandson of Noah) a cult has developed of mother and son, mixed in with idolatry. A book named “The Two Babylons” deals with this.

2. The Greeks had women “goddesses”; so did Romans.

3. Queens began to appear as rulers among the Gentiles; Israel only had one, briefly – Athaliah, a tyrant!

4. In its development in Roman Catholicism, overemphasis on Jesus’ mother Mary’s piety and humility gradually expanded to her (supposed) high position before God as a female mediator, sinless, to be prayed to, and adored! Protestants generally saw that this displaces Jesus Christ, God’s own Son, as the Only Mediator between God and man! Mary needed a Savior also, as we all do. Mary had no teaching ministry; Jesus Christ came as the Word of God – man’s final teacher; we Christians are committed to His Words and teaching. (Matt 7:24-28, Rom. 6:17 NKJV)

Both branches of developed Christendom have fallen into the ridiculous (and satanic) idea of Mary being the “Mother of God”! Rome’s idolatry is worse, with graven images, and an idolatrous Mass, but Eastern Orthodoxy is close behind with useless and unneeded “icons”, lesser images. Both put long hair on Christ, in images and pictures, which He did not have; thus both dishonor Christ, our Lord. Both block knowledge of God and Christ in the true spiritual way; neither have a true salvation message with the power to make men true worshipers and righteous and loving!!

Protestantism was certainly energized by God, and threw off many of these effeminizing influences; Britain

and America are outward manifestations of the gains made by Protestantism. But even here effeminacy has not been totally laid aside. Elizabeth I and Victoria were queen rulers! And though men were at the forefront in worldwide evangelism from the late 1700’s through the 1900’s, women began to be more numerous than men in attempted evangelism. This is a downgrade tendency. So also are all supposed pictures of Christ, large or small, for most show Him with long hair! Paul, only 25 or 30 years later, said that a man growing long hair dishonors his head – a woman’s long hair is her glory! So, much effeminacy has “sneaked” into Protestantism. Theologians, “doctors”, and “arm-chair professors” have allowed it.

So, with the Church failing to equip men for leadership and headship, effeminacy has spread through our whole nation, and throughout our so-called “culture”. Men become tremendously weakened (not so much physically) in the moral and spiritual aspect of their lives; most of them are now poor husbands and fathers. The Supreme Court “Roe vs. Wade” decision encouraging abortion showed a vicious, murderous development of throwing off God’s order, and side effect of effeminacy – women can choose abortion! In the U.S. Promise Keepers has appeared, with good and legitimate challenges to men. We need to see this as a mercy from God, though it can be criticized in some ways. Critics need to have and implement better solutions! But men need to be awakened, and Promise Keepers has done that for hundreds. But the full restoration of men to their God-ordained place for leadership and headship can only be done in local churches, and through believing prayer. Apostles and prophets will be given us to help implement such a restoration.

In history, from the days of the Spanish Inquisition, Rome has been a persecuting church, and therefore a satanic counterfeit. Any church, which will harass the righteous, imprison and torture them, and steal their



property, and even burn them at the stake and drown them can't possibly be the Church Christ built! The Orthodox priests and leaders also habitually persecuted those taking the Gospel in their lands, though not usually with the savagery and sadism of the West. No Institutional Church allied with the government, or State can teach a pure Gospel, or live in the good of it. The so-called Catholic Churches in both East Europe, and West Europe are laden with the blood of martyrs (if you haven't read martyr books, get Foxes' Book of Martyrs, Martyrs Mirror, and Pilgrim Church by Broadbent, and Torch of the Testimony by Kennedy). Such persecution of Christians was a large factor in making Britain Protestant, with her Procterates and colonies, and then America also. Protestantism starts, at least, with a somewhat greater love of peace than the Catholic system, with individuals accountable to God, an open Bible, a much better acknowledgement of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, and a great love of liberty.

But Protestantism does not cure effeminacy; it is almost "taking over" in both Britain and America, and throughout the U.K.

Let me point out trends and present manifestations of effeminacy, and amplify some:

1. Only men voted originally in the British and American systems. Women were allowed and encouraged to vote only in the 1900's and onward.

2. In the U.S. many men were teaching, and only gradually did the public school system develop and become nation-wide. Women rapidly entered this field; many before marriage, and started teaching children and younger ones first. But, by the 1900's, they were teaching in all areas of education – colleges and universities, too. Warden Hardenbrook in "Missing From Action" shows that in many universities in California (if not most) that women preponderate over men!

3. Women, in the U.S. (probably also in Britain and

the U.K.) began reading more than men, and about the mid and late 1900's began buying books far more than men. Reading good and constructive material definitely gives superior knowledge and influence.

4. Hollywood definitely promoted effeminacy. Female "stars" had more and more influence on society, even though almost all evangelical Christians at first shunned the theater. But by the late 1930's more evangelicals started attending the theaters. After the 1950's TV came, with probably a stronger tendency toward effeminacy, and within a decade or two, was brought into even most evangelical homes.

5. Serial comics began to be widely followed in magazines and dailies, and they degenerated very rapidly into making fun of and denigrating the fathers and husbands, and thus implying more control by women! Not all comics did this, but those that did revealed an undercurrent in most of society – men abandoning leadership!

6. From the time of Finney onward – with the Methodists and the later "holiness movement" (not all bad, by any means!) women started praying in public, preaching, at time (earlier Quakers had encouraged this) teaching Sunday school classes, and eventually "taking over" in those churches! With such a percentage of evangelicals (including the growing Pentecostal and "charismatic" churches) already tolerating effeminacy, and that trend even invaded the older and more "staid" denominations that had always had male leadership.

"Brethren", started in England in 1830, stood against this trend, and by and large, obeyed 1Tim. 2 and 1 Cor. 14:34.

Thus the Church in America, largely Protestant, did not appreciably slow up effeminacy, and except for small groups, largely succumbed to it.

7. The Industrial Revolution in the large "civilized"

countries first took a large number of men out of their homes. But it also brought women and children into the factories. World War II was so demanding on the whole populace of Britain and the U.S. that women poured into the factories making war goods, and even bombers, etc. At the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the tendencies toward effeminacy were probably only side effects but during and after WW II the effects skyrocketed. One British woman (a Christian leader during WW I) boasted that British women had won the war! This, of course, referred to all the "back-up" work at home.

8. All wars make widows and fatherless children; most of the women survive. But now, with wide use of automobiles and modern conveniences, women have much more power and leverage, and they use it! Many are doing a large part of the buying, most of the banking, and they are moving into a large part of the domains formerly filled by men. But this means, also, an increasing abandonment of their nurturing roles with their children, and their supporting roles for their husbands! The fruits are rebellious, wild children, divorces, adultery and increasing frustration and despair for many! America's families are disintegrating – many permanently broken or ended.

9. Many of the trends mentioned actually trace back (or are somewhat connected) to the public school system. Bismarck in Germany was one that gave it impetus in about 1870; it became compulsory there, before in America; most teachers had been private before (or parental). Public schools are controlled by the state, not by the church, or parents; they tend definitely toward military training (although not usually seen or connected), and "kingdoms rising against kingdoms". In modern wars, the entire nation is mobilized for war. Down through history, men who wanted excitement and mercenaries did the fighting. Public schools prepare young people for a war mentality, as it did in Hitler's Germany – Hitler Youth fed his war machine!

In co-ed schools, the girls quite often talk faster, learn faster (in academic things) and come out on top rather than boys; this tends to effeminize them. Most of American schools and universities are composed of both boys and girls, men and women, and few guards are set up against fornication and adultery – what a snare! Public schools will degenerate more and more!

But a very large home-school movement has arisen in the U.S. – threatened and harassed at first, but gradually gaining strength, especially from the 1980's onward. It's largely Bible-based, with emphasis on parental control; the parents own the children, not the State! Girls are protected in their parental homes, but not in public schools. That in it self would be a great gain! Almost all children learn better this way.

10. The scant dress on the women, and bikini-type bathing suits, which began in the 1960's, was the worst that ever appeared in history – it surpassed France, a few decades earlier. Certainly the widespread effeminacy already in America had prepared the way for this semi-nakedness, and the resulting immorality. America's influence in the world has propagated this! All men who have not protected their women and girls morally, and have bought these immodest articles of wear, need to repent, and come back into their role of leadership and protectorship!! They are mostly to blame; women and girls are deceived!

A small core of people has avoided the trends and the degeneracy around us – the faithfulness of God. Most of them are true Christians, obeying the Lord in "Be not conformed to this world (age)..." But we didn't speak out enough against these evils; therefore we need to repent, too, when our silence contributed to this "falling away". I'm using that term against the background of wide professing of Christianity. America certainly has more church buildings, Bible schools, seminaries, and religious book publishers than any nation on earth, with almost all of

them sliding world-ward and becoming less and less force against sin and evil.

So widespread repentance is needed in God's house first, then men of virtue, stature, and the fear of the Lord under girding them – many like those given to us by our Risen Lord (Eph. 4:13-17)! Such men will be given, for God is merciful, and His ultimate program will be completed. America, as a nation, may go down in ignominy, and never rise again, but the Kingdom of God will come into manifestation, and obedient Christians will inherit it.

Pray for renewal among Christians first.

#### Concepts which Need Rethinking—Some which Lead to Much Weakness and Inaccuracy

1. A line in the song "What Can Wash Away My Sin"—"This is all my hope and peace...this is all my righteousness." What a tremendous misconception! We ought to sing, "HE is all my hope and peace...HE is all my righteousness." Christ's blood was shed for remission of sins, and for cleansing, but our Savior and Lord is a living Person—we shall be saved by His life. (Rom. 5: 10b).

2. Akin to the above is the concept in a song highly prized by those who put confidence in the Puritan tradition and their writers; Chorus—"I need no other argument, I need no other plea; It is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me." No, emphatically that is not enough; I would change those lines to something like this (the last two clauses): "It is enough that Jesus died and rose, and lives for me." Or "How great, our Savior died and rose again, and lives eternally."

3. Paul to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28: "Feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." Many, who pride themselves on their fidelity to the letter of Scripture, would think they were honoring God and Christ to accept this reading of the King James Version. But there is quite a bit of variation in the Greek texts; it can be read, "Feed the church of the Lord, which He purchased with His own blood," or "Feed the church of God, which He purchased with the blood of His own (Christ)." The phrase "His own" can be found in Romans 8:3 and 8:32, so the last reading I suggest is probably the best. God, being Spirit, does not have blood, for He, only "...has immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable, whom no man had seen nor can see." Christ, in becoming man, did have mortality, so that He could die, but now death no

longer has dominion over Him, and we will be raised with a body like to His glorious body.

4. In Britain and America there has been a subtle switch from justification and reconciliation as a result of Christ's death and shed blood to "salvation" and "saved by the blood." Note the two "much mores" in Romans 5: 9, 10—Salvation by our Living Lord, and by "His life" is much more that justification, forgiveness, and reconciliation—these are the necessary beginning of full salvation. Without the removal of guilt from the conscience, and the knowledge of forgiveness of sins, no one can go forward confidently. But we can't linger there forever, and call that full salvation!! We need salvation from this world, and "octopus-like" seductions and entanglements, it's destruction of our young people; we need salvation for our marriages and families; we need salvation from interior pollution (with renewal of our minds, which is gradual), and from discouragement and depression, and aimless living with no sufficient purpose! Hebrews 7:25 implies a continuous salvation, and that is taught everywhere in Scripture—why else would Christ have to intercede for His own?

5. Eternal Security is considered as a badge of orthodoxy by tens and hundreds of thousands among Baptists, Brethren, and Bible church people, also by many Presbyterians and others in Calvinistic tradition. Unfortunately, especially here in America, the concept of "perseverance of the saints" has been dropped, and is even vehemently argued against. Holding the doctrine of eternal security is not equivalent to "having the Son" (John 5: 12); that involves faith, obedience, practical righteousness, loving the brethren, and following holiness, which will ensure seeing the Lord. In John's Gospel,

where the possession of eternal life is spoken of, it is always connected with continuous believing—the one believing has eternal life. Anyone who knows Greek can easily check this out; John habitually used the article "the" and then connects it with a participle—thus it describes something characteristic—"one believing", "one hearing", "one following", etc. This kind of phrase in Greek never indicates merely a past decision, or even a past action; it indicates something that is characteristic, and continuous. Happily the Spirit leads those on who belong to Christ, even though they are under various degrees of emphasis on this doctrine! We are called onward everywhere in the New Testament, to maturity, to full growth, to holiness, and to bear "fruit" for the glory of God.

6. In our American culture, and even in many seminaries, the submission of the wife to the husband, which is her head, had been "watered down" and largely negated, by a mutual submission theory. This could not have been widely propagated and received if men had been in leadership, and had taken their proper place, accepting and discharging, to the best of their ability, their responsibilities. But men have been delinquent, in their leadership, for many generations, and women have increasingly intruded into the men's sphere and are increasingly moving out of the home into the work force of the nation—all to the detriment of all society, and causing disintegration of many, many marriages and homes. Ephesians 5: 21 is not a submission of order, or rank; rather it is the love and care for each other, with humility and mercy, which we learn from our Lord. It is the absence of arrogance, or desire to be served (instead of serving), or desire to be great, or dominate others. It is also recognition that we are fellow-members of one body, and are "in this thing together".

But God does have an order in His kingdom—the

King is above everyone else, and owe Him total obedience. Christ is the Head of the church, and we are to obey Him in everything. In Ephesians 5:24b, the wife is to try to be as subject to her own husband as the church is to Christ—in everything. This is a submission of order—not just meekness and humility alone; the husband has been given a position of headship—direction for the body, and all that headship entails. He is to be a benevolent and loving head; he is not like an oriental despot. May we all pray that men under Christ, Christians, will be able to function as God intended them to function, and reverse the feminization of the church and society, which will result in everything going wrong!!

Children of Christian parents are to obey them in the Lord—they can't have equality of decision and action with their parents!! Servants are to be subject to their masters, wherever they may be found, and workmen are to be subject to their employers and bosses. Younger ones are to be subject to older ones, in the church and everywhere. Young people, even teenagers, wrought havoc, and were unbelievably cruel, when Mao turned them loose on society in China.

7. The "Carnal Christian" theory is found among many ill-taught and immature Christians; even good men sometimes have propagated this. Most do it from I Corinthians 3, but generally their conclusions are against the entire teaching of Scripture, and tend to disobedience, dead faith, and lack of zeal in the good works God prepared that saints should walk in.

Reading I Corinthians 3 carefully reveals that Paul is primarily addressing workers, not babes and young people in Christ. Watchman Nee and others have rightly seen that most are in the church, and the body, growing up and being trained—those more mature, and who are well established are out in "the work". The work

includes apostles, evangelists, and prophets and teachers who travel—those who "water" like Apollos did—and helpers of these like Timothy and Titus. Obviously, most of the Christians can't yet be out in "the work." So, in I Corinthians 3 the worker is already a righteous person, and obedient Christian, but he also needs a caution concerning what he builds—that it may endure, and truly bear fruit for the glory of God. One quite predominate teacher has gone so far as to conclude "multitudes will just make it into heaven by the skin of their teeth." What folly to teach thus; doesn't it largely negate the basic promise in Matthew 1: 21? When the term "carnal" was used by Paul, he referred to their immature state, but he never indicated that a few, many, or most would ever stay in that state—they would grow up and be saved from their sins, and would walk in faith and righteousness, even if there was some delay in the growth. We, by grace, are God's workmanship (Eph. 2: 10) and He is not in the business of creating (or tolerating) a lot of shoddy workmanship!

8. Terms like the following are "snatched" by well-meaning, but immature Christians, and made to apply to all Christians: "Bearing about in our bodies the dying of Jesus" (2 Corinthians 4: 10); "Taking every thought captive unto the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10: 5); "We are workers together with God" (I Corinthians 3: 9); "...we are ambassadors for Christ..." (2 Corinthians 5: 20). None of the above, in their totality, apply to all Christians; they were true of the apostles, and used in exhortations to the Christians to follow and imitate them—sometimes, to shame them from trying to "reign as kings" in this present evil world, where they had to suffer and overcome. American Christians are very far from "bearing about in their bodies the dying of Jesus" for that refers to the sufferings of the apostles—they faced daily danger and even death!

# A Collection of Writings

*by John Rieley*

*For the Kingdom of God...*

is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.